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ALLISON NELSON: PIANIST, TEACHER AND EDITOR

A DOCUMENT APPROVED FOR THE  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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# ALLISON NELSON: PIANIST, TEACHER AND EDITOR

## ABSTRACT

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The University of Oklahoma, 2015

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This study documents the varied and significant contributions of Allison Nelson (b. 1927) to the field of piano through her work as a solo and collaborative pianist as part of the piano duo Nelson and Neal and teacher, primarily as a faculty member at the University of Tennessee at Martin (UTM), and as a writer and editor of the *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series* and seventeen piano ensemble publications for Alfred Music.

Nelson's career has spanned over seventy-five years. Beginning in 1938, performances as a child prodigy in Australia both on the radio and in public venues for the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) launched what became a distinguished career. As part of the highly regarded Nelson and Neal piano duo, Allison Nelson toured the United States and Canada from 1950 to 1968 with her husband, Harry Neal, performing approximately 1,500 concerts. Following Neal's death in 1968, Nelson served as artist-in-residence at UTM from 1971 to 1989 where she helped establish the bachelor of music in piano performance degree program at UTM and founded the UTM Piano Ensemble, a course for music majors led by Nelson that created performance opportunities for its students. Nelson first wrote and edited the *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series* in the 1960s, and in her retirement began extensive editing work with co-

editor Dr. Maurice Hinson on piano ensemble publications for Alfred Music. This editing work began in 2005 and continues to this day.

Nelson's contributions as a pianist, teacher and editor are characterized by her seriousness as a musician and her deep understanding of the nuances of solo and collaborative performance. The author interviewed Nelson as well as professional colleagues who worked with her in various capacities to profile Nelson's contributions. The author also gathered information through mailed questionnaires from additional colleagues as well as from former students of Nelson.

This study contains seven chapters and several appendices. Chapter 1 introduces the subject, contains a description of the procedures and sources used, and includes a review of similar studies. Chapter 2 contains a biographical sketch of Nelson. Chapter 3 reviews Nelson's contributions as a pianist including her years as a child prodigy in Australia, beginning at age ten in 1938, her time at the Curtis Institute (1944-1949), her Nelson and Neal duo years (1949-1968) and her service as artist-in-residence at UTM and beyond. Chapter 4 considers Nelson's contributions as a teacher, and includes her years as artist-in-residence at UTM where she helped establish the bachelor of music in piano performance degree program, the UTM Piano Ensemble and the University Trio at UTM. Chapter 4 also considers Nelson's attributes as a teacher and the assimilation of her teaching philosophies as seen through the eyes of former students and colleagues who participated in this study. Chapter 5 explores Nelson's contributions through her work on the *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series* and chapter 6 documents her collaboration and work for Alfred Music on piano ensemble editions. Chapter 7 summarizes Nelson's contributions and makes recommendations for further research.

The appendices provide lists of work produced by Nelson as well as information on and methodology used for the research, including interview guides and questionnaires mailed to Nelson's colleagues and former students.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Allison Nelson's career as a pianist spans over seventy years. Nelson (born April 22, 1927) began in Australia with her performing on tour as a prodigy at an early age. She went on to become a celebrated touring performer as part of the piano duo of Nelson and Neal for twenty years, the co-author of a highly regarded piano study series, the subject of an episode of the early television show *This is Your Life*, artist-in-residence and professor of music at the University of Tennessee at Martin (UTM) for eighteen years, the founder of the UTM Piano Ensemble, a co-editor of seventeen piano ensemble publications for the Alfred Masterwork Library, a recognized authority on piano ensemble and a dedicated piano teacher. Her accomplishments as a pianist, a teacher, an editor and a leader in her field merit a study that potentially can impact students, teachers, artists, music educators and biographers, among others.

Allison Nelson became a well-known pianist in her early years with the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), performing solo concerts and with ABC orchestras on many broadcasts as well as on tours between 1940 and 1944. At ten years

of age she played a full length recital in Adelaide Town Hall.<sup>1</sup> At eleven, in 1938, she was awarded a two-year scholarship to the Royal College of Music in London, but because of the outbreak of the Second World War she was unable to attend. Instead she pursued her education in Australia until she was accepted at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia in 1944. Nelson's studies in Australia included her admission to and attendance at the University of Adelaide (1943-1944) where she studied music until she met Eugene Ormandy in 1944. It was that year that she was contracted to perform twice with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra which was led by Ormandy who was visiting from the United States. Following two successful performances by Nelson with Ormandy and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Ormandy was impressed enough with Nelson to make arrangements for her to be admitted to Curtis in the fall of 1944 without the need for an audition.

Her talent and artistry also were recognized by critics. Among these was Neville Cardus, one of Europe's distinguished musical critics and writer for *The Manchester Guardian* (now known as *The Guardian*), who wrote the young Ms. Nelson a letter in 1942, telling her:

I have just heard [the broadcast of] your playing in the D minor *concerto* of Mendelssohn. I am delighted. I'm sure I won't "spoil" you if I say that the performance was one of the freshest, happiest, most naturally musical I have heard for years. Your technique is exceptional, but I never for a moment thought of technique, while this felicitous music came rippling from your fingers.... Now, my dear Allison, I am not in the habit of using superlative language about young artists. But I know that you will not ever grow over-confident. Take care of the rare talent that, by the grace of the gods, is in you. It is precious. You have been chosen as the vessel and safeguard of this genius. Treasure it with pride

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<sup>1</sup> Allison Nelson, "Remembering Rudolf Serkin and Eugene Ormandy," lecture presented at the annual Tennessee Music Teachers Association Conference, Union University, Jackson, Tennessee, June 4, 2013.

and love and modesty. You are a very fortunate girl, and—I am sure—very happy in your gifts.<sup>2</sup>

Nelson began her studies at the Curtis Institute of Music with Rudolf Serkin in September of 1944 and received her diploma in 1949. While at Curtis she continued performing as a soloist, appearing twice with the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Ormandy. Between 1948 and 1950 Nelson began performing with Harry Neal, a former student at Curtis. Nelson and Neal were under contract for a weekly television series of duo performances on WCAU-TV (CBS) in Philadelphia. In 1949, on New Year's Day, Nelson married Harry Neal. Nelson returned to Australia in 1950 under contract with ABC for a solo performance tour. It was during that time that she decided to commit herself entirely to a piano duo career with her new husband.

Together, from 1950 to 1951, the piano duo, known professionally as Nelson and Neal, began the practical and musical preparations they believed were necessary to develop and sustain a duo touring career. This involved intense practice and work on their ensemble. “Day after day,” Harry Neal records, “we slaved to perfect our ensemble (the art of playing precisely together).”<sup>3</sup> On the issue of cueing, the performers found that “there is no answer but the discipline of perfect precision.”<sup>4</sup> But after extensive work with a metronome, establishing “rhythmic rigidity,” they had to

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<sup>2</sup> Harry Neal, *Wave as You Pass* (Philadelphia, J.P. Lippincott, 1958): 43.

<sup>3</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 118.

<sup>4</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 118.



overcome the problem of how to “achieve the spontaneous flexibility of artistic performance while rattling along as precisely as two electric pianos?”<sup>5</sup>

The work of Allison Nelson on these duo preparations included careful consideration of performing appropriate piano ensemble repertoire. For example, “[c]ould a conscientious artist,” the duo asked themselves, “play transcriptions (works written for other instruments and later arranged for two pianos)?”<sup>6</sup> This dilemma was resolved by the duo in a way that became characteristic of Allison Nelson’s later academic and editorial careers—with thoughtful analysis and musical integrity. Harry Neal expressed their shared intellectual approach to duo repertoire as follows:

...an artist without sincerity and integrity is merely an entertainer, and while great artists are often entertaining, entertainers are seldom great artists. The matter of faithfulness to the composer’s original intention is an important one to every serious performer. Mme. Vengerova had used transcriptions, and Mr. Serkin had been death on them. Mozart, Bach, Beethoven and Brahms all made a great art of transcribing. After much soul searching, we decided that transcriptions were acceptable so long as they were expertly written and in good taste.”<sup>7</sup>

Nelson’s success as part of the duo team of Nelson and Neal will be chronicled in more detail later in this study. As the duo team of Nelson and Neal, the couple went on to make approximately 1,500 appearances throughout the United States and Canada. In 1959 Nelson and Neal were the subject of a television broadcast of *This is Your Life*, hosted by Ralph Edwards on NBC. The show was a reality and documentary style television show and the episode on Nelson and Neal aired nationally on January 14,

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<sup>5</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 119.

<sup>6</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 120.

<sup>7</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 120.

1959.<sup>8</sup> Nelson's duo career with Neal also included a world tour in 1967 that was comprised of performances in Fiji, Australia, Manila, Singapore, Hong Kong, Ceylon, India, Lausanne, Salzburg, Berlin and London. Harry Neal passed away unexpectedly in 1968 at the age of forty-one.

Nelson also began writing and teaching careers while still touring with Nelson and Neal. Between 1964 and 1969 she served as a visiting professor at nine colleges and universities. In 1964 Nelson received an honorary doctorate from Mt. Union University in Alliance, Ohio. In 1965 Nelson and Harry Neal co-authored *Grade 1* through *Grade 5* in the *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series*.<sup>9</sup> From 1969 to 1971, Nelson served as a part-time piano instructor at the University of Tennessee at Martin. In 1971 she became associate professor and artist-in-residence at UTM; and from 1986 until her retirement from UTM in 1989, Nelson served as full professor. During her years at UTM, Nelson contributed as a performer and distinguished herself as a teacher.

After retiring from UTM in 1989, Allison Nelson did not stop teaching. In 1991 she served as a part-time instructor at Memphis State University (now University of Memphis). From 1992 to 1994 she served as professor of music at Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee. She returned to UTM as interim professor from 2001 to 2002. She maintains the title of professor emerita at the University of Tennessee at Martin. For most musicians and teachers, that might have been enough. But Nelson remained active in music and the arts during her retirement and in 2005 she embarked on a new

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<sup>8</sup> Classic TV Info, "This is Your Life," accessed October 12, 2014, <http://www.classictvinfo.com/ThisIsYourLife/TIYLEpisodeList.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> Allison Nelson and Harry Neal, *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series* (Chicago, Ill.: Manorhouse Press, 1965). Other books in this series were published between 1967 and 1973.

challenge—editing piano ensemble works for Alfred Music. She remains active as a co-editor for Alfred Music, collaborating with Dr. Maurice Hinson on works for the Alfred Masterworks Library.

A study of Nelson's professional life will demonstrate the possibilities for achieving prominence and success in more than one musical or academic arena. Because Nelson, along with many of her students and colleagues, remain available to document Nelson's professional life and work, this study is particularly timely.

This study relies on several primary and secondary resources to document the biographical and professional information presented. Interviews were conducted with Nelson over a period of four days and either in-person or telephone interviews were conducted with her professional colleagues. One other colleague and eight former students of Nelson provided information through questionnaire responses. This study also relies on publications of Nelson both as an author and editor, including the *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series* (1965-1973) and on her editorial work for Alfred Music in the Alfred Masterwork Library. Other documents and information relevant to Nelson's career accomplishments were available through public sources.

Resources that were used to document and examine Nelson's career came from published reviews, limited recordings, and various unpublished documents from the personal records of Nelson including, without limitation, performance programs, newspaper clippings, photographs, musical scores, letters and similar memorabilia.

## **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to document the many and varied contributions of Allison Nelson to the piano profession by investigating and examining her life, first as a child prodigy, then as a serious student of music and piano, and later as a nationally celebrated pianist who eventually transitioned into a career as an artist, teacher, writer, editor and authority on piano ensemble. To accomplish this, a biographical sketch of Nelson is presented, followed by a more thorough review of her performance career as an artist. The author then considers Nelson's professional life as a teacher at UTM together with her related professional activities outside the university setting. In addition, an examination is made of the content of her written and editorial contributions to the field of piano, including her *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series* as well as her extensive editorial work on the Alfred Masterwork Series for piano ensemble repertoire. Specific questions answered by the study include:

1. What early life experiences, including family, education, music, and specifically piano study and performances, were instrumental in preparing Nelson for a career as both a performing artist and a teacher, writer, editor and leader in her field?
2. What were the important and lasting influences on Nelson as a student, pianist and performer that came from her experiences with Eugene Ormandy and Rudolf Serkin at the Curtis Institute of Music? How did Nelson make the transition from child prodigy to adult pianist and performer? What events and circumstances led to Nelson's professional partnership with Harry Neal as duo performers?

3. What were the important contributions of Nelson's career at UTM? How did Nelson's teaching at UTM impact the university, students and other faculty? What are the characteristics of her teaching style, methods and philosophy as identified by her individual piano students? What impact did Nelson have on her former students at UTM? How are her contributions to teaching and performing viewed by her professional colleagues?

4. What were Nelson's contributions to the field of piano through her *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series* of books?

5. What were Nelson's contributions to piano ensemble literature through her Alfred Masterwork Series of edited works for piano ensemble? How is Nelson's work as an editor viewed by her editorial and publishing colleagues?

6. Given the quantity and quality of Nelson's varied contributions to the field of piano, what reasonable recommendations for further study arise from this study and from these observations?

### **Need for Study**

The piano profession experienced significant growth in the latter half of the twentieth century. The field of piano in the early twentieth century produced a number of prominent piano pedagogues and music educators. Biographical research is essential in filling the gaps in music education. Educational researcher, Carter V. Good, has commented on the subject of biographical research stating "history is an integrated

narrative or description of past events, written in the spirit of critical inquiry, to find the whole truth and report it.”<sup>10</sup>

Historical researchers George Heller and Bruce Wilson are often cited on the fundamental importance of historical and biographical studies. Heller writes on the definition of research, “Research is the careful, systematic study in a field of knowledge, undertaken to establish facts or principles. The goal of research is knowledge. Research includes such things as investigation, study, scrutiny, examination, inquiry, and questioning. It implies the attributes of care, system, patience, diligence, and criticism. It requires capacity to doubt, willingness to question, and persistence to search for truth.”<sup>11</sup>

No study exists to date that documents Nelson’s numerous contributions to the field of piano, ranging from her career as a soloist, a member of the celebrated piano duo team with Harry Neal, her contributions at UTM, her work as an author of a piano study series of books, and as an editor and recognized authority in the field of piano ensemble through, among other contributions, her work with Alfred Music on its Alfred Masterwork Library. A review of Nelson’s career offers a unique perspective for students and pedagogues alike who struggle to find a balance or direction in their own musical careers.

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<sup>10</sup> Carter V. Good, *Introduction to Educational Research: Methodology and Design in the Behavioral and Social Sciences*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963): 180.

<sup>11</sup> George N. Heller and Bruce D. Wilson, “Historical Research in Music Education: A Prolegomenon,” *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* No. 69 (Winter, 1982): 2.

## **Procedures**

This study follows the pattern of similar historical dissertations that review and document the contributions of artists, pedagogues and other educators. Basic research methods were used to gather and interpret data. Biographical and professional information was gathered from several primary and secondary sources. Written documents constitute the bulk of information relied on for this study including, without limitation, books, handbooks, articles, journals, newspaper reports, programs and other printed materials.

The primary sources for the study included the following:

1. Nelson's published writings and books or published works that were edited by Nelson, including works that appear in conference proceedings or journals as well as speeches and notes from which public speeches were given.
2. Published reviews of performances presented by Allison Nelson as an artist, either as a soloist or as part of an ensemble.
- 3 The personal recollections of Nelson's first husband and performance partner, Harry Neal, as published in his book, *Wave as You Pass* (1958).

In addition, Nelson agreed to be interviewed for this study and granted permission to interview her professional colleagues at UTM and to send questionnaires to her former piano students at UTM and to other colleagues both from UTM and outside of UTM. These interviews and questionnaires are referenced as follows:

4. Interviews with Allison Nelson were conducted over four days from January 7 through January 10, 2015 and the following topics were discussed:

A. The educational and musical experiences that contributed to Nelson's development as an artist, a teacher, an authority on piano ensemble, an author and as an editor;

B. The impact on Nelson from her experiences with the following people: Jessica Dix, her first piano teacher, Eugene Ormandy, who guided her education and early career as a patron and friend, and Rudolf Serkin, her principal piano teacher at Curtis;

C. Nelson's performance experiences as a child in Australia, a soloist, later touring as part of the Nelson and Neal duo and finally as artist-in-residence at UTM;

D. Development of the underlying material and eventual writing of the *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series* (1965-1973) by Allison Nelson and Harry Neal;<sup>12</sup>

E. Her career at UTM as artist-in-residence, her founding of the UTM Piano Ensemble, the formation and participation in the University Trio at UTM and her other contributions to teaching through her professional career;

F. Nelson's professional activities outside of UTM including her contributions to state and national organizations, presentation of

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<sup>12</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series*.



master classes, performance engagements and her service on and for state, regional and national arts and music councils or foundations;

G. Nelson's relationship with Alfred Music, her contributions to piano ensemble through her editing of the Alfred Masterwork Editions (see Appendix B) and her collaboration with co-editor Maurice Hinson on this series of publications;

Interview questions that were used as a guide for the interview of Allison Nelson are found in Appendix D.

5. Dr. E. L. Lancaster was interviewed in person on December 22, 2014 concerning his work with Allison Nelson in his capacity as Vice President and Keyboard Editor-in-Chief of Alfred Music. Interview questions used as a guide for the interview of Dr. Lancaster are found in Appendix E.

6. Dr. Maurice Hinson was interviewed by phone on February 18, 2015 concerning his collaboration with Allison Nelson as co-editor of piano ensemble editions in the Alfred Masterwork Series. Interview questions used as a guide for the interview of Dr. Hinson are found in Appendix E.

7. Dr. Elaine Harriss, professor at UTM, department chair and applied piano teacher, was interviewed by phone on January 24, 2015 both as a professional colleague of Allison Nelson and as a former ensemble performance partner of Nelson. Interview questions used as a guide for the interview of Dr. Harriss are found in Appendix F.

8. Phone interviews were conducted with other professional colleagues of Allison Nelson on January 24, 2015, including Dr. Dallas

Weekley, Nancy Arganbright, and Dr. Kevin Lambert. Questions centered on Nelson's leadership roles and abilities and her ideas and approach to piano performance and teaching. Interview questions used as a guide for the interviews of these colleagues are found in Appendices G and H.

9. Sixteen questionnaires were sent to Nelson's other professional colleagues. The information sought from these colleagues related to Nelson's impact on the piano profession through her writings, teaching, performances, professional presentations and her participation in music organizations. The cover letter and questionnaire used for these professional colleagues are found at Appendix H.

10. Twenty-six questionnaires were sent to former piano students in the music program at UTM who studied with Nelson or who studied with Nelson outside of UTM. Questions covered aspects of Nelson's demeanor, approach, consistency, temperament and impact on their training for their subsequent careers. Each interview questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter explaining the research and how the answers and information would be used. The forms of cover letter and questionnaire used for this purpose are found in Appendix I.

In addition to these primary sources, this study relied on secondary sources including:

1. Fifty-four dissertations and theses that pertain to important people in the field of piano and innovators in other disciplines.

2. Texts and monographs relevant to the study of piano performance and pedagogy on the collegiate and graduate levels.

### **Limitations**

An exhaustive biography of Allison Nelson is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, biographical information is presented only as it is deemed necessary to understand the events and circumstances that are relevant to Nelson's development as a pianist, teacher, writer, editor and authority on piano ensemble.

Evaluation of Nelson's contributions as a teacher, to the extent possible, has been developed from responses to questionnaires sent to her former piano students at UTM and from interviews conducted with professional colleagues as well as a questionnaire returned by one professional colleague that were not interviewed by phone or in person.

Evaluation of Nelson's writing and editing was accomplished primarily through interviews with professional colleagues, but also took into consideration the author's review of such works combined with appropriate comparisons of Nelson's works with similar publications.

This study does not purport to document Nelson's entire career as a pianist, but provides a broad outline of her performance career, with specific references to her training and development as an artist, and in particular to her collaborative work, especially to the extent it has impacted her career as a teacher, writer, editor and leader in her field.

## **Organization of Study**

This document consists of seven chapters followed by a bibliography and appendices. Chapter 1 introduces the subject, explains the purpose and need for the study, identifies its limitations and reviews the existing literature comprised of similar studies. Chapter 2 provides limited biographical information about Nelson, presenting a chronological account of her life beginning with her early years and continuing with the events that mark or impact her career as a performer, teacher and piano ensemble authority.

Chapter 3 explores in more detail the performance career of Nelson, particularly the years before she began teaching at UTM. This chapter reviews the specific musical influences in her life, the preparation and instruction she received as an artist, her individual performance career, her collaborative performance career and selected reviews of her performances, her emergence as an authority on piano ensemble through her devotion to and development of ensemble methods and performance.

Chapter 4 examines and documents Nelson's professional contributions to UTM through her service as artist-in-residence, the founding of the UTM Piano Ensemble, her participation in the University Trio at UTM, and her applied piano teaching. This chapter surveys and examines the views of former students and colleagues at UTM of Nelson as a teacher and performer. (See questionnaire of former students, Appendix I, and questionnaire for colleagues, Appendix G.)

Chapter 5 considers the subject's contributions as an author, through the *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series*. Chapter 6 examines Nelson as an expert on and editor of piano ensemble repertoire by examining each publication co-edited by Nelson in the

Alfred Masterwork Series. Chapter 7 presents a career synopsis, conclusions about Nelson and recommendations for further study.

A bibliography is provided as well as several appendices. Appendix A lists volumes in the *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series*. Appendix B provides a listing of the works edited by Nelson as part of the Alfred Masterwork Series while Appendix C lists the journal articles authored by Allison Nelson. Appendices D through I are comprised of the forms of cover letters and the interview questions and/or questionnaires which were used for Nelson, UTM colleagues, publishing colleagues and co-editors, colleagues outside the university setting and former students. Appendix J reflects permission from Alfred Music for use of copyrighted material and Appendix K evidences initial approval by the Institutional Review Board for this study.

### **Review of Similar Studies**

Allison Nelson is a solo and collaborative performer, teacher, clinician, writer and editor and has been a prominent figure in the piano profession for the past sixty years. Various aspects of Allison Nelson's career have been treated in a number of short articles, although no study of her life or work exists at this time. A large majority of documents that have been written about piano performers, teachers, editors and writers are dissertations.

This section of chapter one provides a review of similar studies on topics that relate to one or more aspects of Nelson's contributions to the piano profession. It establishes a background and suggests models for documenting how her work has impacted the music teaching profession. The review of similar studies is divided into

two categories: 1) similar studies on the contributions of performing pianists and 2) similar studies on the contributions of professionals in piano education and teaching.

*STUDIES ON THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF PERFORMING PIANISTS*

Dissertations and theses that document the lives and contributions of significant concert pianists and teachers are applicable to an examination of the contributions of Allison Nelson. Performing artists and significant teachers discussed in these studies have left their legacy as artists through their concerts and their pedagogy. Studies on leading pianists as artist performers and teachers of piano include: Joanne Baker,<sup>13</sup> Lili Kraus,<sup>14</sup> Gray Thomas Perry,<sup>15</sup> Ruth Slenczynska,<sup>16</sup> Gyorgy Sebok,<sup>17</sup> Alan Brandes,<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> David Glen Hatch, "An Examination of the Piano Teaching Skills of Master Teacher, Joanne Baker," (D.M.A. diss., University of Missouri-Kansas City, 1987).

<sup>14</sup> Steven Henry Roberson, "Lili Kraus: the Person, the Performer, and the Teacher," (Ph.D. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1985).

<sup>15</sup> Patricia Jean Trice, "Gray Thomas Perry: Piano Performer and Pedagogue," (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1988).

<sup>16</sup> Carol Shannon Hyde, "A Case Study of an Artist-in-Residence: Ruth Slenczynska, Concert Pianist," (Ed.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1988).

<sup>17</sup> Cynthia Cortright, "Gyorgy Sebok: a Profile as Revealed Through Interview with the artist, His Colleagues, and His Students," (D.M.A. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1993).

<sup>18</sup> Barbara Lynn Hamel, "Dr. Alan Brandes: A Study of the Contributions made to His Music Students, Dana College, and His Profession," (D.M.A. diss., University of Missouri - Columbia, 1999).

Heinrich Neuhaus,<sup>19</sup> Nadia Boulanger,<sup>20</sup> Claudio Arrau,<sup>21</sup> the piano duet team Dallas Weekley and Nancy Arganbright,<sup>22</sup> the piano duo team Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale,<sup>23</sup> a dissertation on the piano teaching of four influential pianists in New York in the late twentieth century: Arkady Aronov, Martin Canin, Gilbert Kalish, and Herbert Stessin,<sup>24</sup> a dissertation on the teachings of Josef Lhevinne and Abbey Whiteside,<sup>25</sup> two additional dissertations on the teaching of Abby Whiteside,<sup>26</sup> two dissertations on

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<sup>19</sup> Galina I. Crothers, "Heinrich Neuhaus: Life, Philosophy and Pedagogy," (Ph.D. diss., Birmingham City University, United Kingdom, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Teresa Walters, "Nadia Boulanger, Musician and Teacher: Her Life, Concepts, and Influences. Volumes I and II," (D.M.A. diss., Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, 1981).

<sup>21</sup> Victoria von Arx, "The Teaching of Claudio Arrau and His Pupils: Piano Pedagogy as Cultural Work," (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 2006).

<sup>22</sup> Kimberly Driesbach, "Contributions of Dallas Weekley and Nancy Arganbright to Piano Duet Performance and Literature," (D.M.A. diss., University of Oklahoma, 2010).

<sup>23</sup> Kenneth T. Freeman, "Duo-pianists Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale and their Contribution to the Two-Piano Repertoire," (D.M.A. diss., The University of Memphis, 2009).

<sup>24</sup> Diane L. Goldberg, "Piano Pedagogy in New York in the late Twentieth Century: Interviews with Four Master Teachers," (D.M.A. diss., University of New York, 1999).

<sup>25</sup> Graciela Guadalupe Martinez, "Basic Principles of Beginning Piano Study: A Comparison of Methodic Approaches of Josef Lhevinne and Abby Whiteside," (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University, 1990).

<sup>26</sup> Patricia Ann Wood, "The Teaching of Abby Whiteside: Rhythm and Form in Piano Playing," (D.M.A. diss., Ohio State University, 1987); Carol Ann Barry, "Continuing Abby Whiteside's Legacy---The Research of Pianist Sophis Rosoff's Pedagogical Approach (Based on the Playing Principles Outlined in the Book 'On Piano Playing' by Abby Whiteside, with Practice and Performance Observations by Carol Ann Barry)," (D.M.A. diss., James Madison University, 2011).

Teresa Carreno,<sup>27</sup> two dissertations on Cecile Genhart,<sup>28</sup> two dissertations on the legacy of Olga Samaroff Stokowski,<sup>29</sup> and two dissertations on Alexander Siloti.<sup>30</sup>

The organization of each of these dissertations is similar to the current study; each dissertation provides an introduction, discusses similar studies and related literature, reveals the results of interviews and surveys from colleagues and students via mail, surveys the life of the research subject through a biographical approach, examines their professional activities as a performer through reviews and recordings, and examines their philosophies and pedagogy. All of these studies include an in-person interview with the research subject except the studies on Claudio Arrau, Heinrich Neuhaus, both of the dissertations on Teresa Carreno, both dissertations on Abby Whiteside, the dissertation comparing the pedagogy of Josef Lhevinne and Abbey Whiteside, the study on Olga Samaroff Stokowski,<sup>31</sup> and the study dedicated to duo-pianists Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale.

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<sup>27</sup> Anne E. Albuquerque, "Teresa Carreno: Pianist, Teacher, and Composer," (D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, 1988); Franco Gurman, "Teresa Carreno and Her Piano Music," (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 2006).

<sup>28</sup> Stewart Lynell Gordon, "Cecile Staub Genhart: Her Biography and Her Concepts of Piano Playing," (D.M.A. diss., University of Rochester, 1965); Cheung, Mandarin Germain, "Pilgrimage of an Artist-Teacher: Cecile Staub Genhart as Remembered by Her Students." (D.M.A. diss., Arizona State University, 1999).

<sup>29</sup> Geoffrey Eugene McGillen, "The Teaching and Artistic Legacy of Olga Samaroff Stokowski," (D.A. diss., Ball State University, 1988); Peter John Van Beck, "The Pedagogy of Olga Samaroff: A Consideration of Her Artistic Legacy," (D.M.A. diss., Rice University, 2005).

<sup>30</sup> Noppawan Tantikarn, "A Biographical Overview of Pianist-Pedagogue Alexander Siloti and His Revision of Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 2.," (D.M.A. diss., University of Miami, 2013); Stephen Ross Pierce, "An Examination of Alexander Siloti's Printed Solo Piano Transcriptions of Works by J. S. Bach," (D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2011).

<sup>31</sup> Van Beck, "The Pedagogy of Olga Samaroff."



The careers of Gyorgy Sebok<sup>32</sup> and Ruth Slenczynska<sup>33</sup> parallel in many ways that of Allison Nelson. Gyorgy Sebok's training at the Liszt Academy in Hungary (with notable teachers, Zoltan Kodaly, Gyorgy Sandor and Leo Weiner) and Ruth Slenczynska's life as a child prodigy and career as a concert pianist mirror Nelson's strong musical training during her early years in Australia. Ruth Slenczynska's eventual transition to artist-in-residence at Southern Illinois University is similar to the transition Allison Nelson experienced when she became artist-in-residence at UTM after touring the United States and Canada with her husband and piano duo partner, Harry Neal.

Dallas Weekley and Nancy Arganbright<sup>34</sup> have served in various professional roles—as concert artists, teachers, composers, authors of books and articles and editors of the duet piano literature—many of which are roles that Allison Nelson served in her career. Weekley and Arganbright composed and edited over fifty volumes of four-hand piano duets, including scholarly editions of standard literature and original compositions and published a graded set of pedagogical method books in the Kjos Piano Library. Weekley and Arganbright continue to give workshops for piano teachers and are master clinicians, encouraging piano teachers to make piano duets a consistent part of every student's curriculum.

Duo Pianists Arthur Gold (1917-1990) and Robert Fizdale (1920-1995) won international acclaim through their piano duo performances.<sup>35</sup> Gold and Fizdale

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<sup>32</sup> Cortright, "Gyorgy Sebok: a Profile."

<sup>33</sup> Hyde, "A Case Study."

<sup>34</sup> Driesbach, "Contributions of Weekley and Arganbright."

<sup>35</sup> Freeman, "Duo-pianists."

premiered two works by John Cage for two prepared pianos at New York's New School for Social Research and continued to commission two piano works from several composers of the twentieth century. This piano duo team collected twenty-three compositions written specifically for them by leading composers including Francis Poulenc, Darius Milhaud, Ned Rorem, John Cage and Paul Bowles. Gold and Fizdale contributed to the piano duo performance medium through their recordings and were the first duo-piano team to sign a contract with a major label, Columbia Records. Their popularity and recognition among influential composers of the twentieth century broadened the two-piano repertory, helping to establish the importance of piano duo teams in the United States.

Teresa Carreno was a child prodigy and made her New York debut at age seven after emigrating to the United States from Venezuela with her family. The study on Carreno discusses her extensive concert career in the United States and Europe and the impression she made on the music profession as a piano teacher of the young Edward MacDowell and through her forty piano pieces.<sup>36</sup> The study on Nadia Boulanger's contributions as a musician and teacher (documented through personal interviews between Boulanger and her researcher)<sup>37</sup> presented her ideas about musical elements including melody, harmony, rhythm, form, performance, composition, conducting, pedagogy, music history and music criticism. This study provides an appendix of all original French texts of quotations on which the study is based, the text of a film about

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<sup>36</sup> Albuquerque, "Teresa Carreno: Pianist."

<sup>37</sup> Walters, "Nadia Boulanger, Musician."

Nadia Boulanger's life by Humbert Balsan, a complete list of her compositions with dates and locations and a list of private students known to have studied with her.

Two dissertations on Cecile Genhart<sup>38</sup> reveal the legacy of her master teaching in her students who have attained significant achievement in their careers and made contributions to the piano profession, including Stewart Gordon, Bradford Gowen, Ernesto Lejano, Anne Koscielny, Aiko Onishi, John Perry, Robert Silverman, Barry Snyder and Mark Westcott. Cheung supplements Gordon's study of Cecil Genhart by focusing on her performances, her teaching and its efficacy as well as her relationship with her students.

Joanne Baker<sup>39</sup> and Alan Brandes<sup>40</sup> were master teachers as professors of music in Missouri and at Dana College, respectively. Forty hours of personal interviews were completed over several days between Baker and Hatch in addition to interviews with eight former students, questionnaires from former students and questionnaires from colleagues drawn from local, regional, national and international representation. The study dedicated to the contributions of Dr. Alan Brandes documents his achievements at Dana College in Blair, Nebraska to his students, the institution and the music profession. Dana College was founded in 1884 and in 2013 it was taken over by Midland University and closed its doors, although there are plans of re-opening in

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<sup>38</sup> Gordon, "Cecile Staub Genhart;" and Cheung, "Pilgrimage."

<sup>39</sup> Hatch, "An Examination."

<sup>40</sup> Hamel, "Dr. Alan Brandes."

2015.<sup>41</sup> Research on Dr. Alan Brandes demonstrates his extraordinary contributions as a solo pianist and educator.

Lili Kraus is one of the prominent performers and pedagogues of the twentieth century and served as artist-in-residence at Texas Christian University from 1967-1983.<sup>42</sup> Roberson's document examines Kraus' performances, piano technique, life and pedagogical strategies. Similar to Nelson's performance and study pedigree—through her relationships with Eugene Ormandy and Rudolf Serkin—Lili Kraus was a transmitter of a musical tradition that descended from her study with Bartók, Steuermann, and Schnabel. Her contributions as a performer with a strong pedagogical upbringing translated into her collegiate teaching at Texas Christian University, as it did for Allison Nelson in her collegiate teaching at the University of Tennessee at Martin.

Olga Samaroff Stokowsky<sup>43</sup> was the first American female to win a scholarship to the Paris Conservatoire, entering into the Conservatoire at a young age (fourteen); similarly, Allison Nelson was the first person to be admitted to the Curtis Institute of Music without an audition, also at a young age (seventeen). Another strong female figure in the piano profession, Abby Whiteside, has been the subject of two

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<sup>41</sup> International Directory of Music and Music Education Institutions (IDMMEI), "Dana College – Blair Nebraska," accessed October 18, 2014, <http://idmmei.isme.org/index.php/institutions?pid=188&sid=1598:Dana-College-Blair-Nebraska>.

<sup>42</sup> Roberson, "Lili Kraus."

<sup>43</sup> McGillen, "Teaching of Stokowski."

dissertations<sup>44</sup> and one dissertation dedicated to Abby Whiteside and Josef Lhevinne.<sup>45</sup>

As an outstanding performer, Whiteside pioneered work in the study of the use of the body in producing a beautiful tone and sound at the piano and a freedom of technique.

Claudio Arrau<sup>46</sup> had a life-long performing career and was a world class performer in the twentieth century. Although no interview was part of this study, his principles of piano playing are discussed through interviews with teachers and transcriptions of lessons given by them and by Arrau. The study examining Gray Thomas Perry's pedagogical heritage<sup>47</sup> includes his musical genealogy back to Isidor Philipp and the Leschetizky tradition of tone production acquired from Ethel Leginska and Franklin Cannon. These performers created a legacy of broad-based pedagogical methods.

Research on Alexander Siloti<sup>48</sup> reviews his life and contributions as a leading Russian pianist and pedagogue of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century. Tantikarn discusses Siloti's early musical training, influential teachers who affected his life, his contributions to composers of his era in addition to Schott and Siloti's editorship of Liszt's *Piano Concert No. 2* and his techniques as a transcriber of Liszt's music. Pierce compares fourteen transcriptions for solo piano by J. S. Bach to

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<sup>44</sup> Wood, "Abby Whiteside: Rhythm;" and Barry, "Continuing Abby Whiteside's Legacy."

<sup>45</sup> Martinez, "Basic Principles."

<sup>46</sup> von Arx, "Teaching of Claudio Arrau."

<sup>47</sup> Trice, "Gray Thomas Perry."

<sup>48</sup> Pierce, "Siloti's Solo Piano Transcriptions;" and Tantikarn, "A Biographical Overview."

transcriptions of the same pieces by contemporaries of Siloti, including Ferruccio Busoni, Ignaz Friedman, Wilhem Kempff, Camille Saint-Saëns and Theodor Szánto. Although no interview of Siloti is included in either study, his contributions as a performer, teacher and editor mirror many of the contributions Allison Nelson has made to the piano profession.

The study dedicated to the piano pedagogy of four prominent piano teachers, Arkady Aronov, Martin Canin, Gilbert Kalish, and Herbert Stessin,<sup>49</sup> investigates the pedagogical ideas and backgrounds of four prominent pianists in New York City during the late twentieth century. Not only are their ideas and teaching styles documented and examined, but interviews were conducted with each master teacher and placed by the researcher in the history of piano pedagogy. Aronov, Canin, Kalish and Stessin all have roots to Theodor Leschetizky. Allison Nelson shares similar roots; during her years at the Curtis Institute of Music, Nelson studied frequently with Mieczysław Horszowski while her principal teacher, Rudolf Serkin, was on tour. Mieczysław Horszowski also studied with Leschetizky.<sup>50</sup> Goldberg's study found a commonality in the piano pedagogy of these four prominent teachers in New York including the importance of listening, quality of sound, understanding the music, technically mastering the material, extreme attention to detail and finding one's individual voice at the piano.

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<sup>49</sup> Goldberg, "Piano Pedagogy in New York."

<sup>50</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

The rise in university study in piano education and teaching has resulted in biographical dissertations and theses that document the contributions of significant professionals in the field of piano education and teaching. Allison Nelson led a two-faceted career, primarily as a solo and collaborative artist, but also as pedagogue as artist-in-residence at the University of Tennessee at Martin, as co-author of the *Nelson and Neal Study Series* and as co-editor of ensemble works for Alfred Music.

Dissertations and theses evaluated in this section include studies on piano teachers that have made an impact through publications as authors, editors and co-editors to the music teaching profession with careers similar in these ways to Allison Nelson.

The dissertations referenced below serve to illuminate the development of the field of piano pedagogy throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; in addition, they further provide a means for surveying the methodologies and approaches to researching leading pedagogues. Researchers of studies similar to the present study point out the need for continued research in the piano pedagogy discipline.

Authors of pedagogical materials who serve as the basis of historical research in piano education and teaching include the following people: William Mason,<sup>51</sup> John

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<sup>51</sup> Kenneth Gene Graber, "The Life and Works of William Mason (1820-1908)," (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1976).

Thompson,<sup>52</sup> Boris Berlin,<sup>53</sup> Willard A. Palmer,<sup>54</sup> Louise Wadley Bianchi,<sup>55</sup> Jon George,<sup>56</sup> Celia Mae Bryant,<sup>57</sup> Marguerite Miller,<sup>58</sup> Clarence A. Burg,<sup>59</sup> Marienne Uszler,<sup>60</sup> Jane Bastien,<sup>61</sup> James Lyke,<sup>62</sup> Louise Goss,<sup>63</sup> Marvin Blickenstaff,<sup>64</sup> Béla

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<sup>52</sup> Cameron Shawn Dibble, "John Sylvanus Thompson: Pianist, Pedagogue, Composer," (D.M.A. diss., University of Missouri at Kansas City, 1992).

<sup>53</sup> Laura Beauchamp, "Boris Berlin's Career and Contributions to Piano Pedagogy," (D.M.A. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1994).

<sup>54</sup> Kathleen Louise Schubert, "Willard A. Palmer's Contributions to Piano Pedagogy," (Ph.D. Diss., University of Oklahoma, 1992).

<sup>55</sup> Samuel Stinson Holland, "Louise Wadley Bianchi's Contributions to Piano Pedagogy," (Ph.D. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1996).

<sup>56</sup> Dianne Evans Garvin, "Jon George: The Composer and His Contributions to Piano Pedagogy," (D.M.A. diss., University of Miami, 1998).

<sup>57</sup> Carol Ann Baskins, "The Contributions of Celia Mae Bryant to Piano Pedagogy," (Ph.D. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1994).

<sup>58</sup> Barbara R. Fast, "Marguerite Miller's Contributions to Piano Pedagogy," (Ph.D. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1997).

<sup>59</sup> Linda Joyce Owens, "The Contributions of Clarence A. Burg to Piano Pedagogy," (Ph.D. University of Oklahoma, 1997).

<sup>60</sup> Karen E. Beres, "Marienne Uszler's Contributions to Piano Pedagogy," (D.M.A. diss., University of Oklahoma, 2003).

<sup>61</sup> Elaina Burns, "Contributions of Jane Bastien to Piano Teaching," (D.M.A. diss., University of Oklahoma, 2011).

<sup>62</sup> Chee Hyeon Choi, "The Contributions of James Lyke to Piano Pedagogy," (D.M.A. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2012).

<sup>63</sup> Judith Jain, "Louise Goss: The Professional Contributions of an Eminent American Piano Pedagogue," (D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2012).

<sup>64</sup> Sara Marie Ernst, "The Legacy of Master Piano Teacher Marvin Blickenstaff: His Pedagogy and Philosophy," (Ph.D. diss., University of Oklahoma, 2012).



Bartók,<sup>65</sup> two dissertations dedicated to the contributions of Frances Clark,<sup>66</sup> Lynn Freeman Olson (the subject of two dissertations<sup>67</sup> and a thesis<sup>68</sup>) and Maurice Hinson.<sup>69</sup> (with three dissertations dedicated to his many contributions). All of these musicians contributed authorships of musical prose or editorial works, or both.

Each of these dissertations is similar in organization to the current study. They each present an introduction, explain the need and purpose for the study, review similar studies in the field of piano pedagogy, assess the results of interviews and surveys from colleagues and students through in-person interviews, survey the life of the research subject through a biographical approach, and document the subject's professional activities as a pedagogue through their contributions at the university level and through their publications. An in-person interview with each music educator took place with his

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<sup>65</sup> Fun-Yin Huang, "Bartók's Contributions to Piano Pedagogy: His Edition of Bach's 'Well-Tempered Clavier' and Impressions of Former Students." (D.M.A. diss., The Ohio State University, 1994).

<sup>66</sup> Robert Fred Kern, "Frances Clark: The Teacher and Her Contributions to Piano Pedagogy," (D.A. diss., University of Northern Colorado, 1984); Allison Lynn Hudak, "A Personal Portrait of Frances Oman Clark through the Eyes of Her most Prominent Students and Collaborators," (D.M.A. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2004).

<sup>67</sup> Steven Lee Betts, "Lynn Freeman Olson's Contributions to Music Education," (Ph.D. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1995); Constance Herbert, "Lynn Freeman Olson: Technical and Pedagogy Elements of His Music for Piano," (D.M.A. diss., University of Missouri at Kansas City, 1992).

<sup>68</sup> Leila J. Viss, "Lynn Freeman Olson: His Philosophy of Music/Piano as Reflected in His Literary Works and a Small Sample of His Piano Compositions," (M.A. thesis, University of Denver, 1990).

<sup>69</sup> Jonathan A. Brown, "Maurice Hinson's Pedagogical Collections for Intermediate-Level Piano Students," (D.M.A. diss., Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, 1994); Vernon Twilley Cherrix, "Maurice Hinson: An Annotated Bibliography of His Writings," (D.M.A. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997); Sheryl Rich Lane, "Maurice Hinson: His Life and Contributions to Piano Pedagogy," (D.M.A. diss., the University of Memphis, 2003).

or her respective researcher with the exception of Béla Bartók,<sup>70</sup> William Mason,<sup>71</sup> John Thompson,<sup>72</sup> Clarence A. Burg<sup>73</sup> and one of the dissertations that review Francis Clark's contribution to piano pedagogy.<sup>74</sup>

The present study of Allison Nelson's life is similar in structure to the dissertations and theses reviewed in this chapter with respect to her contributions at the University of Tennessee at Martin and her contributions beyond the walls of the university through the *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series* and editorial publications of piano ensemble repertoire with Alfred Music. Nelson's professional course is slightly different from some others in that her career was first established as a child prodigy and she then spent her early adult career performing on the road as a piano duo team with her first husband, Harry Neal.

Although the studies dedicated to Béla Bartók's<sup>75</sup> and Frances Clark's<sup>76</sup> contributions to piano pedagogy do not include interviews with either research subject, personal interviews with former students provide details of their philosophies and insight into their pedagogy. Huang interviewed two of Bartók's prominent students, Gyorgy Sandor and Storm Bull. The pedagogues Hudak interviewed who were

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<sup>70</sup> Huang, "Bartók's Contributions."

<sup>71</sup> Graber, "Life and Works of William Mason."

<sup>72</sup> Dibble, "John Sylvanus Thompson."

<sup>73</sup> Owens, "Contributions of Clarence A. Burg."

<sup>74</sup> Hudak, "Portrait of Frances Oman Clark."

<sup>75</sup> Huang, "Bartók's Contributions."

<sup>76</sup> Hudak, "Portrait of Frances Oman Clark."

impacted by Clark include Louise Goss, Sam Holland and Martha Hilley. Interviews with prominent students of these leading pedagogues, both Bartók and Clark, demonstrate the continual need for biographical research of professionals in piano education and teaching. The lineage of prominent piano pedagogues from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries continues to impact the field of music education and teaching into the twenty-first century.

Huang's document dedicated to Béla Bartók reviews Bartók's influences on piano pedagogy, gathers recollections of his former students Sandor and Bull through interviews and reviews Bartók's performing style and composition. Huang reviews Bartók's edition of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* for phrase markings, accents, dynamics, expression marks and fingerings. This study evaluates the tremendous contributions Béla Bartók made primarily as a pedagogue and an editor.

The study dedicated to the life and contributions of William Mason<sup>77</sup> documents his contributions to the field of piano and piano pedagogy in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century. An in-person interview of Mason by Graber was not possible (Mason was born in 1829), therefore three special collections of Mason's memorabilia were used to review Mason's life: The William Mason Papers, the William Mason Collection of Autograph Letters and the William Mason Collection of Musical Autographs. Mason's contributions as an American performer, pedagogue and composer are documented to preserve his legacy and influence during the nineteenth century.

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<sup>77</sup> Graber, "Life and Works of William Mason."

John Thompson's contributions to piano pedagogy and music education are reviewed through an evaluation of his philosophy toward teaching the elements of piano technique used by concert pianists for beginning, average-age children.<sup>78</sup> This study reveals Thompson's choice early in his life to dedicate his career to teaching and learning how to play the piano. *John Thompson's Modern Piano Course* (1937) were best sellers among piano teaching materials during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s and continue to be used into the twenty-first century. Thompson's philosophy that piano technique and artistry could be applied to the child by the use of miniature forms and interesting, original melodic pieces were key to his success. This study reveals that Thompson's compositions were some of the most influential piano instructional materials during the twentieth century, due in part to his reduction of melodies of many famous masterpieces to fit the ability of a small hand.

The study of Willard A. Palmer's contributions to the field of piano pedagogy provides a complete catalog of Palmer's publications, a listing of journal reviews of his publications, programs from concerts and recordings, research pages from the Masterwork Series and the criteria used to evaluate Palmer's methods books.<sup>79</sup> Palmer's innovative methods and carefully edited volumes of keyboard literature have placed him at the forefront of piano education in the United States.

The study of Clarence A. Burg's<sup>80</sup> career as dean and professor of piano in the School of Music at Oklahoma City University (1928-1982) reviews not only his

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<sup>78</sup> Dibble, "John Sylvanus Thompson."

<sup>79</sup> Schubert, "Willard A. Palmer's Contributions."

<sup>80</sup> Owens, "Contributions of Clarence A. Burg."

university activities but also his contributions as a professional leader in the Oklahoma Music Teachers Association (as a founder and its first president) and the National Guild of Piano Teachers. While an in-person interview with Burg was not possible, interviews with Burg's relatives and archival materials provided biographical data for this study. Questionnaires returned by sixty-seven of his former piano and piano pedagogy students reveal Burg's piano teaching philosophy and approaches. Based on the data, the overwhelming majority of Burg's students were positively influenced by him in their playing and teaching, as well as in their lives beyond their lessons or classes.

Boris Berlin's career is documented through a study that researches his contributions as a piano teacher, pedagogical author and composer.<sup>81</sup> In addition to his teaching in Canada at the Royal Conservatory of Music and at the University of Toronto, the study examines his publications of hundreds of teaching materials between 1930 and 1994 as well as his teaching philosophy. Berlin contributed to the pedagogy of young beginners in developing an approach that emphasized perceiving groups of notes and their direction using creative illustrations that visually reinforce musical patterns.

Jane Bastien<sup>82</sup> contributed to the development of American piano methods for pre-school, average age and older beginner studies through the Bastiens' method book series. Bastien not only authored a wealth of piano materials with her husband, James Bastien, she is a beloved teacher to hundreds of students. Similar to Burns' study of Jane Bastien, this study will document Allison Nelson's demonstrated, long-standing commitment to the music teaching profession.

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<sup>81</sup> Beauchamp, "Boris Berlin's Career."

<sup>82</sup> Burns, "Contributions of Jane Bastien."

Celia Mae Bryant<sup>83</sup> contributed to the field of piano pedagogy through her activities as a teacher, writer in the *American Music Teacher* and *Clavier*, clinician, adjudicator, and organizational leader in Oklahoma Music Teachers Association. The contributions of Marguerite Miller<sup>84</sup> to piano pedagogy through her thirty-eight year teaching career at Wichita State University, teacher of group piano, applied piano and piano pedagogy are examined in the study by Fast. Marianne Uszler<sup>85</sup> contributed to the field of piano pedagogy through her work as a professor at the University of Southern California, a leader in national organizations and an editor and author of pedagogical books, handbooks, journals, helping to shape the field of the piano pedagogy during the twentieth century.

Three dissertations dedicated to the many contributions of Maurice Hinson<sup>86</sup> review his life, his publications and his teaching. Cherrix's research reviews primary sources of Hinson's entire published output and secondary sources on editorials and reviews of his published writings, recordings, pedagogical approaches and editions. Lane documents Hinson's life, career and contributions to the field of piano and music education. Her sources include a survey that gauges how regularly Hinson's publications were used by piano teachers across the United States in addition to their opinions about them. Brown's research included an in-person interview with Hinson.

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<sup>83</sup> Baskins, "Contributions of Celia Mae Bryant."

<sup>84</sup> Fast, "Marguerite Miller's Contributions."

<sup>85</sup> Beres, "Marianne Uszler's Contributions."

<sup>86</sup> Brown, "Maurice Hinson's Pedagogical Collections;" Cherrix, "Maurice Hinson: An Annotated Bibliography;" and Lane, "Maurice Hinson: His Life and Contributions."

Brown's study examines Hinson's entire editorial output, although special attention is given to Hinson's collections of intermediate-level piano literature, and an entire chapter in this study is dedicated to Hinson's Chopin collections.

The varied contributions of James Lyke<sup>87</sup> are revealed through his forty years as an educator, author, administrator, composer, clinician, adjudicator and performer. His contributions to the field of piano pedagogy are reflected in his co-founding of the National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy, duties as professor at the University of Illinois, teaching materials and national and international workshops presented.

Lynn Freeman Olson<sup>88</sup> co-authored three piano courses, *Music Pathways* (written with Marvin Blickenstaff and Louise Bianchi), *Piano for Pleasure* (co-authored with Martha Hilley), and *Piano for the Developing Musician* (co-authored with Martha Hilley). *Music Pathways* is written for average-age beginners; *Piano for the Developing Musician* is written for non-keyboard undergraduate music majors; and *Piano for Pleasure* is written for adult beginners. Betts discusses and evaluates these three piano courses in addition to supplementary materials Olson composed and edited. The 1994 study by Betts is the only study that incorporated an in-person interview with Lynn Freeman Olson into its research. This dissertation is modeled after the evaluation criteria developed by Schubert, who wrote on the life and work of Willard Palmer.<sup>89</sup> The evaluation criteria for all three of Olson's piano courses are based on reading,

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<sup>87</sup> Choi, "Contributions of James Lyke."

<sup>88</sup> Viss, "Olson: His Philosophy;" Herbert, "Technical and Pedagogy Elements;" and Betts, "Olson's Contributions to Music Education."

<sup>89</sup> Schubert, "Willard A. Palmer's Contributions."

technic, rhythm, musical understanding, design and format, musical quality and pedagogical principles.

The study dedicated the legacy of Marvin Blickenstaff documents his extensive career.<sup>90</sup> Blickenstaff taught piano to all ages for over fifty years, presented to teachers nationally and internationally, published writing on teaching and materials for students, held professional positions at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1969-78) and at Goshen College (1978-99). Beginning in 2000, Blickenstaff began service as the president of the Board of Trustees of the Frances Clark Center for Keyboard Pedagogy.

One of the most important contributions Louise Bianchi<sup>91</sup> has made to the music teaching profession is co-authorship of the piano course *Music Pathways*. Bianchi co-authored *Music Pathways* with two other prominent figures in the field of piano pedagogy, Marvin Blickenstaff and Lynn Freeman Olson. Holland's study divides the documented American pedagogues that model the life of Bianchi into three groups that are similar in organization to the present study: artist teachers in the field of performance, teachers involved in group piano settings in colleges and individuals who focused on pre-college pedagogy through their publications.

Jon George<sup>92</sup> was a composer of many pieces for the elementary and intermediate piano student including *Artistry at the Piano*, created in collaboration with his wife, Mary Gae George. Garvin's study provides a general survey of the music used in piano method books for historical context and investigates the learning theories

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<sup>90</sup> Ernst, "Legacy of Blickenstaff."

<sup>91</sup> Holland, "Bianchi's Contributions."

<sup>92</sup> Garvin, "Jon George."



current at that time to place them in an educational context. George's main contributions are as a co-author of *Music Tree* with Frances Clark and Louise Goss, *Kaleidoscope Solos* and *Kaleidoscope Duets* and *Artistry at the Piano*. This study evaluates the sequencing of musical material in *Artistry at the Piano* in great detail, exhibiting the importance of selected appropriate-level repertoire for the piano student.

The two dissertations dedicated to the contributions of Frances Clark<sup>93</sup> research her career as a teacher, author of pedagogical materials (*Music Tree*) and as founder of the Frances Clark Center for Keyboard Pedagogy with long-time friend, Louise Goss. Kern's study on Clark surveys the history of selected piano methods and materials prior to 1940. An in-person interview between Clark and researcher Kern is an invaluable part this study; Hudak's study on Clark does not include an in-person interview.

Louise Goss<sup>94</sup> was a founding member of the Frances Clark Center for Keyboard Pedagogy and long-time friend of Frances Clark. The biographical dissertation on Goss focuses on her contributions to the field of piano pedagogy, documents her *Clavier* magazine column, "Questions and Answers," her involvement in the development the New School for Music Study, and her role at the Frances Clark Center for Keyboard Pedagogy. This study also documents Goss's teaching philosophies and thoughts on the future of piano pedagogy.

All of the studies reviewed above provide guidance for establishing a model and methodology for this study on Allison Nelson. Recommendations from these studies uniformly reflect the need for further research on performing pianists and on

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<sup>93</sup> Kern, "Frances Clark;" and Hudak, "Portrait of Frances Oman Clark."

<sup>94</sup> Jain, "Louise Goss."

professionals in piano education and teaching. Although most of these studies are similar in organization and content to the current study, none precisely mirror the contributions Nelson made as a performer, teacher and editor. Nelson's career contributions draw from these categories of studies and merit the documentation of the specific ways in which her career has impacted the field of piano.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

#### **Early Life in Australia (1927-1939)**

Allison Nelson was born in Adelaide, Australia on April 22, 1927 to John Alfred and Violet May Nelson. She began studying piano with her mother, May Nelson, at the age of five, settled in with an excellent piano teacher, Jessica Dix, at the age of six and played her first full length recital in the Adelaide Town Hall at the age of ten on April 2, 1938.<sup>95</sup> Her early childhood was a disciplined one that taught her to follow instructions and to trust her parents. In one instance, these qualities may have saved her life:

“Children stand still!”

Three little statues froze beside a dusty road, and the woman watching them felt her heart freeze also. In an agony of suspense she prayed that they would not try to run when they saw the deadly Brown Snake, then only inches from the shoes of her eldest child. Australia is a land as large as the United States, and has few non-poisonous snakes; about some there is a saying, “You’re dead ten minutes before they bite you,” for the Death Adder is almost invariably fatal. Not a sound stirred the air, nor could any motion be seen, save that of a six-foot reptile gliding past May Nelson’s three small children. They came from strong stock: their father’s people had always been Swedish sea-captains, and their mother’s iron will demonstrated amply why her Cornish ancestors were the only people in England never defeated by William the Conqueror. Now the

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<sup>95</sup> *The Advertiser*, Adelaide, Australia, March 19, 1938, in the Trove, National Library of Australia, accessed October 17, 2014, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/30853830>.

stillness was unnatural, but with no sudden motion to startle the deadly Brown Snake into activity, it soon passed under a fence and disappeared.  
Discipline had paid off.<sup>96</sup>

May Nelson was a stay-at-home mother and John Nelson owned a meat store in Adelaide, the capital city of the state of South Australia.<sup>97</sup> The family lived in the same home in Adelaide from the time Nelson was about three months old and continuing until her parents eventually retired.<sup>98</sup> She is the youngest of three children with an older brother, John Murray Nelson (b. 1923), and sister, Kathleen Myrtle Nelson (b. 1921). Growing up with a father in the meat business brought certain advantages, and Nelson fondly remembers the wonderful food prepared by her mother including stuffed leg of lamb, lamb chops for breakfast, steak and eggs, tripe and onions and liver and onions.<sup>99</sup>

The family acquired its first piano when Nelson's father purchased a "nice American-made Cable upright" for her mother, May Nelson, who promptly began taking the lessons she had always wanted.<sup>100</sup> As a child, May Nelson had a father who was a "stingy Cornishman from England" who would not buy a piano and who resented the fact that he had three daughters and no sons—even to the point of calling each of his daughters by boys' names.<sup>101</sup> May was "Tom" to her father. It was not until after she was married and able to express herself in more normal ways, that May realized her

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<sup>96</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 17.

<sup>97</sup> Allison Nelson, interview by author, tape recording, Jackson, TN, January 7, 2015.

<sup>98</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>99</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>100</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

<sup>101</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

dream of a piano and lessons.<sup>102</sup> When she went for piano lessons, she would take her youngest daughter with her. This is Allison Nelson's earliest memory, at three years of age, sitting on the lap of Miss Kentish, her mother's piano teacher, while her mother took her lessons.<sup>103</sup>

Even at this early age, Allison Nelson would stand in front of the keyboard and "reach up my hands and play."<sup>104</sup> May Nelson told her that if she really wanted to play the piano, she would teach her what she could. So that is what she did—eventually teaching her daughter the notes and how to move her hands on the keys. As a result of these and other circumstances, she believes that her mother "had everything to do with [her] development as a pianist."<sup>105</sup> By the time she was five-and-a-half, Allison Nelson was ready for more. Her brother and sister studied violin with Lionel Dix, a fine local musician. It was during this time period that Lionel Dix suggested to May Nelson that his sister hear Allison play. As remembered by Nelson, "We did not know it at the time, but Miss Dix was an outstanding pianist and teacher."<sup>106</sup> Miss Jessica Dix became Nelson's teacher and continued as her only teacher until she began her studies with Rudolf Serkin at the Curtis Institute of Music.

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<sup>102</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>103</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>104</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>105</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>106</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

Nelson displayed a good musical ear early in life as well as a desire for perfection on the keyboard. Neal recounts Nelson's audition for Miss Dix, which most likely occurred sometime in 1932, as follows:

Auditioning for a new teacher, little Allison Nelson demonstrated her sense of "perfect pitch." Then, in performance, she played a wrong note; it was obviously a serious matter, and she crawled under the dining-room table to cry away her shame. A box of candy soon patched things up, and Jessica Dix was delighted to have a new pupil straining for perfection this early in the game.<sup>107</sup>

Nelson experienced piano training at a high level from Jessica Dix. "It was fortuitous that I had a marvelous teacher right from the start, who taught me all the right things from the beginning."<sup>108</sup> She studied scales and arpeggios, ear training, sight reading and theory lessons. She was taught to "respect the score and play accurately everything that was written there."<sup>109</sup>

During her grade-school years Nelson was also supported in her piano studies by her father whom she remembers as a "sweet, kind, thoughtful man."<sup>110</sup> Despite his love for listening to cricket matches on the radio in the evenings, he would exile himself to the family's kitchen and glue his ear to a radio while his youngest daughter practiced piano in the living room next to the kitchen.<sup>111</sup> He also gave up his Sunday mornings to

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<sup>107</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 23.

<sup>108</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>109</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

<sup>110</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>111</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

take his daughter to her lessons at Miss Dix's home, waiting outside in the car for her lessons to finish, "no matter how long they were."<sup>112</sup>

Nelson's introduction to ensemble also started at home. She and her brother and sister played trios together. Since her siblings played the violin, each playing in the youth orchestra in Adelaide, she would sometimes accompany them to orchestra rehearsals. Their trio practice sessions would often become playful, and Nelson remembers that she would brashly tell her brother and sister if they played wrong notes, and they in turn would poke and swat her with their violin bows.<sup>113</sup>

Nelson's musical education was measured through the Australian Music Examinations Board (AMEB) which provided annual exams and auditions. She explains that the examinations were roughly equivalent to MTNA and Guild auditions, and that the exams were graded, with passing scores required before a student could advance to the next level.<sup>114</sup> Although it is not clear which year Nelson began this testing or at which level, it is known that she passed the grade four exam with honors at the age of seven in 1934, after less than two years of study with Jessica Dix.<sup>115</sup> Opportunities for monetary prizes were also offered by AMEB in connection with the testing and auditions for music students beginning at the third level.<sup>116</sup> Nelson earned monetary prizes from AMEB in each year she was eligible and she completed the

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<sup>112</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>113</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>114</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

<sup>115</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>116</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

AMEB exam and audition levels by the age of eleven, in 1938. In her own words, these studies “were perfect for what was coming as a student of Serkin.”<sup>117</sup>

Despite a childhood centered on piano studies, there are reports that Nelson had other interests and perhaps some activities. For example, it seems that she very much liked cats. “Next to music, her greatest interest is cats. She has three at home.”<sup>118</sup> She also liked to ride horses, to read and to watch movies.<sup>119</sup> But Nelson’s memories today suggest a more limited and serious early life centered on her piano studies:

There were no family events other than visiting a few friends, a few intimate friends and immediate family. So except for music and music events, I had no social life per se. Zero. If you’re going to be serious about something, that’s the way it’s going to go.<sup>120</sup>

Nelson frankly recalls that there was nothing in her community, church or school that influenced her more at an early age or that shaped her more than her piano studies. For example, she was restricted from playing in any sports in school to avoid hurting her hands. As a result, while her classmates were “playing basketball and running around and playing,” she just had to “sit there... like an idiot... not being involved in anything the other students were doing.”<sup>121</sup> There was simply nothing that competed for her time spent studying piano despite the fact that she was also an

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<sup>117</sup> Nelson, “Remembering Serkin.”

<sup>118</sup> *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners’ Advocate*, “Allison Nelson Wants to Work Lathe,” New South Wales, June 9, 1944, in the Trove, National Library of Australia, accessed October 17, 2014, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/134929626>.

<sup>119</sup> *The West Australian*, “Youthful Pianist – Allison Nelson Arrives,” Perth, Australia, July 28, 1944, in the Trove, National Library of Australia, accessed October 17, 2014, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/44817471>.

<sup>120</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>121</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.



excellent student in school. On a typical day in grade school Nelson would get up early and practice for an hour on the piano before school, then return home from school and practice for a couple of hours more.<sup>122</sup>

As a child, Nelson attended the local public schools and excelled in her school studies, noting that she “was always head of the class in [her] grades.”<sup>123</sup> She remained in the public schools until she was eleven, following this pattern of hard work and focus that likely crossed over from piano to her schoolwork. Nelson switched to a private school at age eleven or twelve, around 1939, to allow for more time to focus on her practicing. At seven or eight years of age it was not difficult for her to practice; it was just expected and that was how she lived her life: “I mean it was accepted like eating three meals a day, you practiced this much every day.”<sup>124</sup> Nelson does not appear to suffer from any regrets about these early years of time-consuming practice and study on the piano. She is proud of her early life, particularly when she compares these early times to what she sees today:

[Today] it’s all about the children having fun when they’re doing something in school. It has to be fun before they will enjoy it. That’s not my attitude, nor what I grew up with. What I grew up with was that childhood was devoted to preparing you to be an adult, to earn a living and be a responsible adult. It’s not to grow up as a child having a good time.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>123</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>124</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>125</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

In 1936, at the age of nine, Nelson performed for music clubs and at fund raisers for civic groups.<sup>126</sup> At the age of ten, Nelson debuted as a soloist with her first city-wide recital in the Adelaide Town Hall on April 2, 1938. Press reports from this solo performance, provided in chapter 3, show that Nelson made a strong musical and technical impression as a pianist. These early years set in place an approach to her life that would carry Nelson forward throughout her career. Studying piano was her priority and it was to be taken seriously. In fact, from Nelson's earliest memory at the age of three, sitting on Mrs. Kentish's lap during her mother's piano lesson, until this first large scale recital at the age of ten in 1938, Nelson was leading a very determined life.

This is the approach she took to her schoolwork and her piano studies as a child and it continues to be her attitude about early education years for children to this day: "It's serious to me. Education is a serious situation and it's important for children to be educated." It is reasonable, then, to view Nelson's early childhood years as the determined preparations of a serious child headed for a lasting performance career. And it is not surprising that she continued her education in ways that would complement her blossoming opportunities to play piano over the following five or six years of her life in Australia.

### **Education and Early Performance Years in Australia (1939-1944)**

Between late 1938 and the summer of 1944, Allison Nelson emerged as a bright talent in Australia; and her performance opportunities served a dual purpose: they

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<sup>126</sup> Allison Nelson, email to author, February 17, 2015.

matured her as a performer and they also created educational opportunities that would eventually lead her to the Curtis Institute in the United States in 1944. In fact, it is impossible to separate Nelson's education in Australia during these years from her activities and opportunities as a pianist. This period in the Nelson's life, from the age of twelve to seventeen, is best seen through this dual lens.

In 1939, at the age of twelve, Nelson gave her second solo recital in Adelaide Town Hall, and by then she was getting more attention from Australian media. One of those reviewers commented that, "She has made excellent progress since her previous performance, and with normal development she should blossom into one of Australia's most gifted pianists."<sup>127</sup> This success as a pianist led to unusual educational opportunities for Nelson as well.

Although the exact date is not clear, sometime in early 1939 or perhaps as early as late 1938, when Nelson was eleven years old, she was awarded a two-year scholarship to the Royal College of Music in London. This was an excellent opportunity for a gifted music student, but Nelson was never able to take advantage of it and travel to London. At first, Nelson was simply too young to study abroad, so the scholarship was held over until 1942 when she was fifteen. By then World War II was raging in Europe, making London and the associated travel from Australia too dangerous for a

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<sup>127</sup> H. Brewster Jones, review of recital performance by Allison Nelson on October 21, 1939, Adelaide Town Hall, Adelaide, Australia, *The Advertiser*, "Young Pianist's Success – Allison Nelson Holds Town Hall Audience," October 23, 1939, in the Trove, National Library of Australia, accessed October 17, 2014, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/49821297>. See chapter 3 for additional detail on this performance.

teenager.<sup>128</sup> Nelson was forced to decline the scholarship and continue her music studies in Australia.

Although she could not leave Australia to study abroad, Nelson's parents made adjustments in their daughter's schooling to accommodate her music studies and performance opportunities in Australia. As Nelson recalls,

I was in public school until I was about eleven or twelve. And then I needed to have more time free in the day to practice, so I was sent to a Church of England girls' school which was close by where I lived. And I used to go to school only in the mornings and then I would go home in the afternoon and practice.<sup>129</sup>

In 1940 Nelson received her first "music degree," that of Licentiate of Music in Australia (L. Mus. A.) following her years of study and testing by the Australian Music Examinations Board. Whether this is viewed as a degree or a certificate, what is clear is that Nelson was the youngest person to receive this license in Australia and it allowed her officially to teach music in Australia at the age of thirteen.<sup>130</sup>

During the years between 1939 and 1941 there are few contemporaneous records of Nelson's public performances, although it is clear she was performing at least occasionally while she continued with her schooling. For example, there is a record from the University of Adelaide that Nelson performed with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra in July of 1940, at Adelaide Town Hall, although no program information is

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<sup>128</sup> *The Mercury*, "Young Pianist at Hobart," Hobart, Tasmania, June 29, 1944, in the Trove, National Library of Australia, accessed January 15, 2015, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/26003809>.

<sup>129</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>130</sup> Nelson, email, February 17, 2015.

available.<sup>131</sup> Later press notices suggest she first performed with this orchestra at the age of fourteen, which would have been in 1941. It is also worth noting that some of these press notices occasionally misreported Nelson's age.<sup>132</sup> In 1941, at the age of thirteen, Nelson gave her first on-air piano ensemble performance, playing on the "Youth Show," a weekly radio broadcast on ABC radio. For that performance Nelson played the "Waltz" from *Suite No. 1*, Op. 15 for two pianos, four hands, by Anton Arensky, teaming up with Richard Farrell, a New Zealand pianist.<sup>133</sup> By 1940 or 1941, Nelson would begin to have opportunities to perform with orchestras on the radio thanks in part to her teacher, Miss Jessica Dix.

Jessica Dix was able to arrange these early orchestral performance opportunities for Nelson partly as a result of Dix's position as the official accompanist for the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), the public broadcaster in Australia that later became the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. This connection, together with Nelson's growing abilities as a performer, made it possible for her to play on ABC broadcasts and to perform with ABC orchestras. At that time ABC had established six symphony orchestras, one in each state in Australia.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> AusStage, "Allison Nelson," July 19, 1940, University of Adelaide Library Theatre Collection, Program Advertisement, accessed October 16, 2014, <http://www.ausstage.edu.au/pages/event/83917>.

<sup>132</sup> For example, see the reference in chapter 3 to *The West Australian*, "Pianoforte Recital," Perth, Australia, August 1, 1944, where the newspaper reports Nelson's age incorrectly by one year.

<sup>133</sup> Nelson, email, February 17, 2015.

<sup>134</sup> Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia: No. 37—1946 and 1947*, (Canberra, Australia: L.F. Johnston, Commonwealth Government Printer: 1946), 1013; "The Australian Broadcasting Commission

Nelson's early ABC orchestra performance opportunities were typically with the ABC studio orchestra and not in front of a live audience.<sup>135</sup> Nevertheless, Nelson performed many times with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra as well as other ABC orchestras in Australia. Some of these performance opportunities were summarized at the time as follows:

At 14 she made her orchestral debut for the ABC in Adelaide. Later she appeared with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and last year [1943] with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. This season will set the seal on Miss Nelson's musical standing with her engagement by the ABC to play several times during the celebrity orchestral season, including concert works under the American conductors Eugene Ormandy and Edwin McArthur.<sup>136</sup>

The press note above preceded Nelson's performance in Hobart, Australia, in the island state of Tasmania. Her rising prominence as a pianist created opportunities to travel all over Australia to perform. Sometimes this meant that Nelson would give a solo performance as well as perform with one of the ABC orchestras. For example, in late July of 1944, Nelson traveled to Perth, Australia and gave two distinct performances. It was noted that she would play a solo concert in Winthrop Hall at the University of Western Australia on August 5 and then play with the "Perth Symphony orchestra at the ABC celebrity concert on the following Saturday [August 12, 1944], where she would play the Beethoven C Minor *Concerto*."<sup>137</sup> More detail about Nelson's early performances during this period (1939 to 1944) is provided in chapter 3. As her

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controls six symphony orchestras and a national training orchestra.... This makes it one of the biggest musical entrepreneurs in the world."

<sup>135</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

<sup>136</sup> *The Mercury*, "Young Pianist at Hobart."

<sup>137</sup> *The West Australian*, "Youthful Pianist," July 28, 1944.

performance opportunities grew, so did Nelson's future opportunities to study music in school.

In December of 1942, at the age of fifteen, Nelson was considered sufficiently advanced in her music studies to be accepted into the music program at the University of Adelaide to begin her college studies. She began studying there in January of 1943 and was exempted from all "fees for lectures and examinations in the course of the degree of bachelor of music."<sup>138</sup> Although Nelson had not completed her high school courses at this point, none of the adults in her life seemed to think moving her into a college environment would be a problem.

Nelson freely acknowledges that her education during these years was "rather weird."<sup>139</sup> In fact, she was expected to engage in her university studies and also figure out on her own how to separately finish high school on a home study basis. Nelson recalls that during her short tenure in high school and before, she studied Shakespeare as her English course as well as French language courses for several years.<sup>140</sup> At that time in Australia, receiving a high school diploma consisted of passing four subjects or areas of study of your own choosing including English and a foreign language.<sup>141</sup> It was the completion of this process that was pushed into the background so she could pursue her piano and music studies at a more advanced level at the University of Adelaide. As

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<sup>138</sup> Nelson, email, February 17, 2015, quoting from an original notice from University of Adelaide, Office of the Registrar. The academic year in Australia ran from January through December.

<sup>139</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>140</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>141</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

one might guess, her performance schedule in 1943 and 1944 and simultaneous university study made it impossible for Nelson to complete the high school course work.

These years from 1942 to 1944 were active for Nelson as she studied at the University of Adelaide and also toured and performed with ABC. She was an excellent student and her hard work and study did not go unnoticed. For example, the Australian press enthusiastically reported at the time:

Allison won her first exhibition at the age of seven, passing Grade IV with honours; and she has since won every scholarship and exhibition available in both theory and practice. These include highest marks in the Licentiate Examinations at the age of twelve, and, soon afterwards, the scholarship that is now enabling her to study for the Mus. Bac. degree [at the University of Adelaide].<sup>142</sup>

Nelson's activities, in 1943 and 1944 when she was sixteen and seventeen, were regularly reported in the Australian media. While on tour for ABC, for example, the press accounts instances of Nelson generously giving her time to the war effort, including a visit to an American field hospital in July 1943 where she played for the soldiers. The *Muswellbrook Chronicle* reported, "While in Sydney, recently for her concert, Allison visited the American Field Hospital at Herne Bay, where she played for the men all the afternoon. 'They seemed to enjoy it,' she [Nelson] observed. 'I played them everything from 'Chattanooga Choo Choo' to Bach's 'Toccata and Fugue'!"<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> *The Muswellbrook Chronicle*, "ABC Stars of the Air – Fifteen-Year-Old Concert Pianist Allison Nelson's Bright Career," July 13, 1943, in the Trove, National Library of Australia, accessed October 17, 2014, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/107699883>.

<sup>143</sup> *The Muswellbrook Chronicle*, "ABC Stars." July 13, 1943.



By the spring of 1944, at sixteen years of age and about to turn seventeen, the college student had matured into an accomplished solo performer. As the American media noted years later, “At sixteen, [Nelson] became a solo pianist for the Australian Broadcasting Commission’s Symphony Orchestra and gave twenty-seven concerts...”<sup>144</sup> It is apparent that Nelson gained considerable experience traveling and performing both solo and with orchestra, demonstrating the growth in her level of practice and commitment. “Allison realizes that hard work, particularly while young, is essential for a successful musical career and spends at least six hours a day at the piano.”<sup>145</sup> When Nelson traveled for these performances it was common for her older sister, Kathleen, to travel with her by train as chaperone.<sup>146</sup>

The year 1944 was a turning point for Nelson. It was the year she met and performed with Eugene Ormandy in Sydney, Australia, and the year that she would finally be given a viable opportunity to study abroad. Despite having just turned seventeen, she was in her second year of her bachelor of music degree program at the University of Adelaide and was also under contract with ABC for a country-wide tour of Australia. This tour included her concerto performances with Eugene Ormandy conducting. Nelson’s first performance with Ormandy leading the Sydney Symphony Orchestra occurred in May of 1944 and made a clear impression on Ormandy. The American conductor almost immediately began making arrangements for Nelson to

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<sup>144</sup> Peta J. Fuller, “Wave As You Pass: How Young America Lives,” *Ladies Home Journal*, (January 1956): 107.

<sup>145</sup> *The West Australian*, “Youthful Pianist.”

<sup>146</sup> *The Advertiser*, Adelaide, Australia, May 29, 1944, 5, in the Trove, National Library of Australia, accessed October 6, 2014, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/74631533>.

attend Curtis, but the certainty of this was unknown to Nelson. It was late in the summer of 1944 when Nelson would eventually learn that Mr. Ormandy was able to arrange a full scholarship and assure her travel to and attendance at the Curtis Institute. She did not learn of this from Mr. Ormandy or from Curtis. Instead, she heard the news first in a phone call she received from her local newspaper asking for an interview about her “forthcoming trip to the States.”<sup>147</sup>

It was on this basis, in late August, 1944, that Nelson abruptly left the University of Adelaide, her hometown, her family and Australia, during a time of war and instability, and made her way by steamship and train on a route covering nearly seventeen thousand miles to Philadelphia to begin a new stage in her musical education. The seventeen-year-old’s feelings upon leaving Adelaide and her home to pursue her education and piano in the United States were recorded tenderly by Harry Neal many years later in his 1958 book, *Wave as You Pass*:

One last time—she told herself—while the family is out of the house and away. She sat down at the old, familiar keyboard. The voices of her parents had faded, the reporters had vanished, the excitement was gone. How do you touch a piano for the last time?

Here, in this room, she had battled day and night as far back as memory could carry her. Here, long ago, she had bitten her hands and arms in a fury over their reluctance to master the Saint-Saens G minor Concerto octaves. Here, six months ago, she prepared for the greatest tour of Australia ever attempted by an artist her age. Only ten days ago she was practicing here when the reporters rang up to say that Eugene Ormandy had returned to America and arranged a special scholarship for her to study at the famed Curtis Institute of Music.

Lord Gowrie, Governor-General of Australia, had personally cut through all wartime red tape to arrange her immediate passage to America as a special guest of the Swedish-American Steamship Line. In a few minutes she would leave this house on the longest and most meaningful journey she had ever taken. All the life, and tears, and love which she would leave with this piano!

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<sup>147</sup> Nelson, “Remembering Serkin.”

Perhaps, just one last time ....<sup>148</sup>

Nelson departed Adelaide on August 31, 1944, traveling by ship to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada and then by train across North America. She arrived in Philadelphia on September 30, 1944 where she was met by Eugene Ormandy and Miss Hoopes from Curtis.<sup>149</sup> She would remain in the United States and not return to Australia until 1950, after completing five intensive years of study and performing at the Curtis Institute between 1944 and 1949.

### **Curtis Institute of Music (1944-1949)**

The move to Curtis represented a substantial change in Nelson's musical life. Due to Ormandy's arrangements, she had the opportunity to study piano under Rudolf Serkin in an elite environment for musicians. The Curtis Institute of Music was founded in 1924 by Mary Louise Curtis Bok, daughter and heir of Cyrus H. K. Curtis, the founder of the Curtis Publishing Company (publisher of *The Saturday Evening Post* and *The Ladies Home Journal*).<sup>150</sup> Fashioned from three mansions purchased for the purpose by its founder,<sup>151</sup> and located on Rittenhouse Square, the Curtis Institute

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<sup>148</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 49.

<sup>149</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

<sup>150</sup> The Curtis Institute of Music, 2014, "History," accessed October 10, 2014. <http://www.curtis.edu/about-curtis/history>.

<sup>151</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

provided all of its students a full-tuition scholarship,<sup>152</sup> but admission was limited to very few musicians and granted only after a competitive audition process (which Ormandy had persuaded the school to waive in the case of Nelson). The Curtis Institute hired some of the world's finest faculty to teach its students and it treated all students as "on probation at all times" such that they could be terminated for unsatisfactory work.<sup>153</sup>

Ormandy and Helen Hoopes, secretary of admissions at Curtis, made arrangements for Nelson before her arrival. They rented her a room in a boarding house for Curtis female students which included "a 7-foot Steinway piano, a routine piece of equipment supplied for all Curtis piano students."<sup>154</sup> Everything at Curtis exuded quality, as noted by Harry Neal:

Situated at the edge of a little park known as Rittenhouse Square, the handsome gray building still radiated a feeling of calm elegance.

I had already been inside the school for a practice session before my audition, and had been awed by the music which came from its studios, the beautiful carpeting, the fine paintings, and above all the profusion of splendid pianos.... Here, every studio seemed to have a first-class professional instrument."<sup>155</sup>

On the evening of the same day that she arrived, Nelson attended her first concert in Philadelphia at the Academy of Music, an auditorium built in 1857 that was the home for the Philadelphia Orchestra. The concert she attended that evening featured

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<sup>152</sup> Bridge to Music, "The Curtis Institute," accessed October 10, 2014, <http://www.bridgetomusic.com/curtis-institute-of-music-btm138.php>.

<sup>153</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

<sup>154</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

<sup>155</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 64.

Mr. Ormandy leading his orchestra, and her new musical life was quickly underway. Ormandy told Nelson that she would study with Rudolf Serkin and she relied on his judgment in that choice. At the time, she did not know who Serkin was. Nelson notes, Serkin probably made an exception in accepting her as a student without an audition.<sup>156</sup> She later played for Serkin a few days after arriving in Philadelphia, recalling that she played the Brahms *Scherzo in E-flat*, and he promptly scheduled her first lesson the following week.<sup>157</sup>

By 1944, Nelson was acquainted with hard work on the piano, but studying with Rudolf Serkin would demand even more because Serkin, revered as a pianist, was known especially for his inexhaustible work ethic:

He joined the international elite while still a teen-ager and by incessant, tireless practice held ranking for more than half a century as an artist of the highest type. He was an eminent 20th-century representative of a Viennese tradition that mingled the classical and romantic styles of pianism.<sup>158</sup>

Nelson's first lesson with Serkin, in October of 1944, quickly established for her what would be expected at Curtis with her new teacher:

My first lesson was an eye-opener. For lessons, everything had to be memorized, prepared in full and at performance level and tempo. Serkin's teaching (for me) was primarily coaching for musical content, but I had a lot of work to do to find out what that musical content was. The first lesson introduced me to Mozart style. This included tempo, legato and non-legato style, phrasing, dynamics and every detail you can imagine. I can remember plainly coming out of the studio (which was on the second floor) and heading down the stairs

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<sup>156</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

<sup>157</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

<sup>158</sup> Donal Henahan, "Rudolf Serkin, 88, Concert Pianist, Dies," Obituaries, *New York Times*, May 10, 1991, accessed February 17, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/05/10/obituaries/rudolf-serkin-88-concert-pianist-dies.html>.

weeping. I had never had such a musical going over in all my life. There were no compliments, as I remember.<sup>159</sup>

One aspect of Nelson's education under Serkin which showed later in her teaching and her editorial work was Serkin's attitude about respecting a musical score. She recalls:

Serkin rarely wrote anything in the music. My early education in respecting the score was in line with one of Serkin's passions. My reaction to it today is severe. I get almost nauseated if I see a lot of markings in the music, particularly colored flair pens. Immediately after lessons I would go to the practice room and carefully try to remember everything he had said, to get ready for the next lesson.<sup>160</sup>

This illustrates the level of commitment and the desire for total musical authenticity that permeated Nelson's musical education at Curtis.

Although Serkin was her principal piano teacher for her five years at Curtis, Nelson also studied with Mieczyslaw Horszowski when Serkin was unavailable, usually due to his performance and touring engagements. Horszowski was also a pianist of the highest caliber and a musical treasure "whose performances were admired for their elegance, reflectiveness and clarity of musical intent."<sup>161</sup> Nelson's studies with Horszowski were frequent enough for Nelson to be listed on the published Curtis recital programs between 1946 and 1949 as a student of "Mr. Serkin and Mr. Horszowski" or

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<sup>159</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

<sup>160</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

<sup>161</sup> Allan Kozinn, "Mieczyslaw Horszowski Is Dead; Pianist, 100, Mastered the Greats," Obituaries, *New York Times*, May 24, 1993, accessed February 17, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/05/24/obituaries/mieczyslaw-horszowski-is-dead-pianist-100-mastered-the-greats.html>.

“Mr. Horszowski and Mr. Serkin.”<sup>162</sup> She recalls Horszowski as “a remarkable and kind musician,” and notes that she did not know how fine an artist Horszowski was until years later because he was such a private and quiet person.<sup>163</sup> Horszowski was a student of Leschetizky, who studied with Czerny, who studied with Beethoven, and like Serkin, he made a strong impression on Nelson.<sup>164</sup>

While in Australia, Nelson was unapologetically focused almost entirely on piano as her area of study. Yet even while at Curtis, her lack of a high school diploma continued to nag at her. Nelson took some high school courses by correspondence while at Curtis but eventually stopped. It is ironic, of course, that an educated, talented and highly acclaimed pianist would have concerns about this unusual order to her education. Nevertheless, Nelson still reports with a gleam in her eyes that she “never did finish high school, you understand.”<sup>165</sup>

Nelson was recognized for performances as well as for her studies at Curtis. In 1945 she was a winner of the Philadelphia Symphony Youth Auditions which led to two performances with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy in 1946. In 1947 Nelson was the winner of the Curtis Alumni Prize as the “outstanding student.” She was fortunate to be under the watchful eye of Eugene Ormandy and his wife who treated

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<sup>162</sup> Internet Archive, Curtis Institute of Music, “Recital programs 1945-46; 1946-47; 1947-48 (1945),” accessed February 16, 2015, <https://archive.org/details/recitalprograms4548curt>; and “Recital programs 1948-49; 1949-50; 1950-51 (1948),” accessed February 16, 2015, Recital programs 1948-49; 1949-50; 1950-51 (1948).

<sup>163</sup> Nelson, “Remembering Serkin.”

<sup>164</sup> Nelson, “The Kind and Gentle Horszowski,” *Clavier* 42, no. 1 (January 2003): 2.

<sup>165</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

Nelson “like a foster child.”<sup>166</sup> The couple gave her free access to their home and invited her for many meals and to receptions for the artists who performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Nelson recalls that she was committed to practicing while at Curtis and that the Ormandys graciously allowed her to practice at their home on Sunday mornings so that she wouldn’t bother the other Curtis students at the boarding house where she lived.<sup>167</sup>

Nelson also had interesting and productive summers while at Curtis. She spent her first summer (1945) in Lake Placid, New York, as the guest of Mrs. Herbert Morris, a friend of the Ormandy’s. She spent the next summer in Guildford, Vermont, at a farm house close to the summer home of Rudolf Serkin. The Curtis Institute made these arrangements for Nelson and other students of Serkin and even shipped pianos which the students could use for practice while staying in Vermont. During that summer (1946), Nelson was able to practice and take lessons with Serkin. She also made trips with other students to the Tanglewood Music Center (in Lenox, Massachusetts) to see fellow students from Curtis perform.<sup>168</sup>

Nelson received a first class education at Curtis and this period in her life was full of great music and exposure to fine artists. Nelson describes some of her experiences during these years as follows:

In Philadelphia I had access to many of the great artists of the day – Heifetz, Horowitz, Milstein, conductors and composers, and also some of the world’s great social leaders. At school, not only did I study the required musical subjects, I also studied French, German, and Italian to help with accompanying

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<sup>166</sup> Nelson, “Remembering Serkin.”

<sup>167</sup> Nelson, “Remembering Serkin.”

<sup>168</sup> Nelson, “Remembering Serkin.”



singers. I was able to work as a teacher at the Settlement Music School, and Shipley Girls School and play concerts (for money). My student visa forbade me to work for money but the authorities decided that any musical endeavor was necessary for my musical education. At the Settlement School I believe my pay was 25 cents per lesson – the students paid 50 cents and we split the fee. At Curtis one year, I worked as accompanist for the Opera Department and at another time, I worked as a rehearsal pianist for a voice teacher in town.

What made Philadelphia so special is that it is small by large city standards and yet it is so accessible to NY and Washington. It has history, great art galleries and wonderful music.<sup>169</sup>

By 1947, another piano student at Curtis had caught the attention of Nelson.

Harry Neal was a student of Isabelle Vengerova for two years at Curtis and in 1948 he and Nelson quietly began planning a future as a couple. At one point, Neal arranged for Nelson to play a short series of recitals in or near Paris, Tennessee (Neal's family home) so that Neal's parents could meet Nelson.<sup>170</sup> Neal left Curtis early, before Nelson completed her studies there, but he stayed in Philadelphia and worked at WCAU-TV (a CBS affiliate). It was at that time that Neal arranged for the two of them to play as a piano duo on a weekly television series at WCAU-TV. Those weekly local television performances continued between 1948 and the beginning of 1950 and served as the genesis of what became a celebrated career for Nelson as part Nelson and Neal. In spring of 1949 Nelson completed her formal education at Curtis and received her diploma, but not before taking an important personal step that would formalize her musical partnership with Harry Neal.

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<sup>169</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

<sup>170</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 107.

### **Nelson and Neal Years (1949-1968)**

Alison Nelson married Harry Neal on New Year's Day, 1949, at the age of twenty-one, despite her family's wishes that she not marry quickly.<sup>171</sup> The couple were married at the country home of Kit and Sydney Wright at Endsmeet Farm, in Wyncote, Pennsylvania and their wedding ceremony was officiated by Rev. Roger Huber of the Second Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia.<sup>172</sup> They became a personal and professional team for nearly twenty years until Harry Neal's untimely death on September 15, 1968. Their professional career together blossomed after Nelson was contracted for a solo performance tour of Australia by ABC in early 1950. It was on that solo tour, before Neal was able to join her in Australia, when Nelson realized that a duo career with her new husband was the way she wanted to make a living as a pianist.

Harry Neal arrived in Australia in mid-1950 to join Nelson, meet her family and to explore their opportunities for duo performances there. More importantly, what came out of this trip was a commitment between Nelson and Neal to commence, in earnest, a duo career. The couple arranged a contract with ABC for a series of two-piano recitals on the ABC coast-to-coast radio network.<sup>173</sup> And with that contract came their determination to return to the United States and build a professional career as the duo team of Nelson and Neal. In mid-1951 the couple returned to live in Paris, Tennessee, when Nelson was barely twenty-four years old.

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<sup>171</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 115.

<sup>172</sup> *The News*, "Orchids at Wedding of Allison Nelson," Adelaide, Australia, December 31, 1948, 11, in the Trove, National Library of Australia, accessed October 6, 2014,

<sup>173</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 117.

Nelson and Neal started in Tennessee, in the spring of 1951, to explore how to establish themselves as professional duo pianists. Although some thought was given by the couple to initiating this career endeavor in New York, as most others did, they launched their professional career from Paris, Tennessee. With help from Neal's mother in arranging performances, the couple purchased an old truck and made modifications to load and drive two pianos to their performances. They visited the Baldwin Piano Company in Cincinnati and made a deal to purchase two new "matched" grand pianos and went into debt.<sup>174</sup> In the summer of 1951, Nelson and Neal played nine concerts to kick off their touring duo career and to explore connections that might lead to additional bookings that fall and winter. In the fall of 1951, they set off on a tour to play sixty-six concerts in the 1951-52 season. The following season they played 103 engagements. After two-and-a-half years of hard work on the road, the couple made their New York debut with a recital at New York's Town Hall in October of 1953. These early years of the couple's touring life as well as selected performance reviews and a discussion of their New York debut in 1953 are addressed in more detail in chapter 3.

In 1956, Nelson and Neal were the subject of a featured article in *Ladies Home Journal*.<sup>175</sup> In 1960, they were again the subject of a featured article, this time in *Coronet*.<sup>176</sup> Television found Nelson and Neal as well when the couple was featured on *This is Your Life*, hosted by Ralph Edwards on NBC. The nationally broadcast program

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<sup>174</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 134.

<sup>175</sup> Fuller, "How Young America Lives," 97.

<sup>176</sup> Richard Kaplan, "Musical Family on Wheels," *Coronet*, February 1960.

aired on January 14, 1959, celebrating the professional lives of Nelson and Neal and the somewhat unusual nature of their touring career.<sup>177</sup>

During their touring years, the couple had three children, John Murray (b. 1954), Mary Catharine (b. 1955) and Allison Elise (b. 1957). Nelson was pregnant with their first child, John, when the couple made their New York debut in October of 1953. One reviewer noted this circumstance following their New York performance:

But a special mention for Allison Nelson Neal who, pianistically was first-rate, made a charming picture as well, and in addition appeared to be taking good care of a potential Neal who's starting his musical education in the prenatal stage. If exposure means anything, he should be a genius.<sup>178</sup>

Neal and Nelson purchased a custom-made bus to continue touring as a family. This method of touring became a reason for their popularity. Another aspect of their fame came from traveling with their two concert grand pianos and the fact that they tuned their instruments themselves before each performance.

In the 1960s Nelson also did the majority of the writing and editing work that Nelson and Neal produced in the form of the *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series*. It is a series of ten books plus a *Teacher's Manual* which Nelson considers to be a "very serious approach" to the study of piano and which took two years or more to develop, including extensive research by Nelson.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Classic TV Info, "This is Your Life," accessed October 12, 2014, <http://www.classictvinfo.com/ThisIsYourLife/TIYLEpisodeList.htm>.

<sup>178</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 181, quoting from the review by Harriett Johnson in the *New York Post*.

<sup>179</sup> Allison Nelson, interview by author, tape recording, Jackson, TN, January 9, 2015.

In 1964 Allison Nelson and Harry Neal were awarded doctorate degrees (honorary) by Mt. Union University in Alliance, Ohio. Nelson had no connection with Mt. Union University other than the school's invitation to perform there, and it was an unexpected honor that the school awarded the degrees during their time on campus. Nelson notes that during that time period their management had generated a great deal of publicity on their career.<sup>180</sup>

In 1967, Nelson and Neal embarked on a world tour that included performances in Fiji, Australia, Manila, Singapore, Hong Kong, Ceylon, India, Lausanne, Salzburg, Vienna, Berlin and London. This tour was arranged through the joint efforts of the duo's personal manager and the couple's overseas connections supplied by their New York management. Nelson's favorite memories from this tour, besides the performances, are from the fine hotels everywhere they stayed and certain scenes from their stay in India. For example, when their pianos were unloaded in India, the workers carried the pianos on their heads. She also remembers children sleeping in doorways and poor sanitation conditions.<sup>181</sup>

By 1968 the couple had been performing together for approximately twenty years, commencing with their time playing on local television in Philadelphia (WCAU) from 1948 to 1950. They had both begun teaching in the 1960s as well. Their teaching was comprised of workshops, master classes and performances that arose from their relationships with many colleges and universities and resulted in annual or multi-year contracts for these services. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the couple loved their

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<sup>180</sup> Nelson, email, February 17, 2015.

<sup>181</sup> Nelson, email, February 17, 2015.

collaboration as performers and as partners. Harry Neal expressed his feelings on their ensemble in 1958 as follows:

We love each other, playing together, and we love the two-piano medium. In the late piano works of such composers as Beethoven and Brahms you can hear them struggling with the limitations of what ten fingers can do on a keyboard. It is small wonder, then, that many composers in their mature years turned toward chamber music. This was a form expanded beyond the possibilities of a solo instrument, yet limited enough that the composer was never overstretched technically. Conceived as chamber music, two-piano playing is a gratifying art form.<sup>182</sup>

Unfortunately, the couple's personal and professional partnership came to an end in 1968. On an ordinary September evening in Paris, Tennessee, Harry Neal had been to the local movie theater, had his bag of popcorn which he loved, and had gotten into bed. As Nelson was getting ready for bed, Harry reported a terrible pain in his chest, and "suddenly he wasn't moving."<sup>183</sup> Harry Neal passed away quickly and unexpectedly on September 15, 1968.

### **University of Tennessee at Martin and Following Years (1969- )**

After nearly twenty productive years playing with Harry Neal as a piano duo, earning a living touring the United States and beyond, Allison Nelson suddenly found herself personally and professionally alone. She went through a transition between 1969 and 1971 during which she continued performing and teaching part time. In 1971, Nelson's part-time work at UTM was rewarded when she was offered and accepted the

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<sup>182</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 212.

<sup>183</sup> Allison Nelson, interview by author, tape recording, Jackson, TN, January 8, 2015.

full-time position as artist-in-residence at UTM. Even so, getting through this transitional period was both a personal and professional challenge for Nelson.

At the end of 1968 and as she began 1969, Nelson had three children for whom to care, a full calendar of scheduled duo performances to begin immediately, a schedule of teaching and performing to be given as visiting faculty, a small publishing business (Otto Kapell) to operate, and no guaranteed income other than the duo bookings and teaching workshops for the Nelson and Neal season of 1968-1969. Nelson decided to return to solo playing after not performing as a soloist for almost twenty years. Due to these circumstances, she took a couple months to get herself in shape “physically and emotionally before [she] could do that [continue on tour].”<sup>184</sup> She re-scheduled all performances originally booked for Nelson and Neal to prepare solo repertoire and “most places were able to just reset dates for later on in the spring” of 1969.<sup>185</sup>

Performing as a soloist represented a change for Nelson as did the presentation of workshops that she had previously done only with her husband, and during which Harry Neal had done all of the public speaking:

So for the rest of the season, from January [1969] through the end of April of the next year, after my husband’s death, I played all of the concerts that they would reschedule for me, and ones that had been rescheduled. I did all of the workshops that had been scheduled for him to do. And this was for a person that was not used to speaking you understand.<sup>186</sup>

One of their visiting faculty relationships was with UTM where the couple had a contract for “two or three years” and Nelson decided that she would finish out that

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<sup>184</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>185</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>186</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

contract.<sup>187</sup> In addition, after operating Otto Kapell for a period of time, Nelson decided to sell that business and her publishing rights to the *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series* to GIA Publishing in Chicago.<sup>188</sup>

The Nelson and Neal visiting-faculty contract with UTM was similar to contracts the couple had with several other colleges and universities. They were required to spend a few days at each college, give a master class or workshop and then perform. As noted above, Nelson decided to fulfill all of these contracts in addition to the contract with UTM. These activities occupied Nelson's time for two years, from 1969 to 1971. It was near the end of that two years that Harriett Fulton, Chairman of the music department at UTM, and Robert Stewart, piano faculty, approached Nelson and offered her a full time faculty position to begin in the fall of 1971.<sup>189</sup> At that stage in her life Nelson welcomed the full time position because she had three school-age children, John, Kathy and Elise, to raise. In addition, her son John was preparing to enter college at UT Knoxville at the age of fifteen. "I had these three children all approaching college age who needed to be educated and supported, so my working as a faculty member was most important."<sup>190</sup> Nelson also recalls that it "was an extraordinary thing" that she was offered the job at UTM without even knowing that the job was available.<sup>191</sup> She began

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<sup>187</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>188</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>189</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>190</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>191</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.



as a full time faculty member and artist-in-residence at UTM in the fall semester of 1971.

Nelson's career at UTM extended from 1971 to 1989 when she retired, but she returned for one academic year, 2001 to 2002, to replace a piano faculty member who left soon before the start of the 2001 fall semester. Nelson's distinguished career as a teacher at UTM is covered in more detail in chapter 4, but it is fair to say here that Nelson was responsible for several key developments and improvements in the music and piano programs.

In 1979 Nelson married Dr. David Loebakka, Professor of Physics and Chair of the Department of Physical Sciences at UTM (now Professor Emeritus of Physics). In 1986, Nelson became full professor of music and piano at UTM. She became active in the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) and the Tennessee Music Teachers Association (TMTA), later moving her affiliation to the West Tennessee Music Teachers Association (WTMTA). She adjudicated piano competitions, including concerto competitions, and became active more broadly in music and the arts, serving on the Tennessee Arts Commission (TAC), from 1982 to 1989. Nelson also participated at the national level on the Music Panel in Washington D.C. for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 1985, 1987 and 1989.

In 1989, following fifty years of professional activity and after talking it over with her husband, Nelson decided that she would retire at the age of sixty-two.<sup>192</sup> But as seen below and in later chapters, Nelson's years following her tenure at UTM allowed her to become active in many other teaching, editing, music and arts endeavors.

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<sup>192</sup> Nelson, email, February 17, 2015.

Nelson continued living in Martin, Tennessee until 1999 when Dr. Loebbaka retired from UTM, and the couple then moved to Jackson, Tennessee, where they now reside. Since her UTM retirement, Nelson has continuously remained active in the fields of piano, music education and the arts. After her retirement from UTM, she served as a part-time piano instructor at Memphis State University (now University of Memphis) in 1991 and then as professor of music at Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee from 1992 to 1994.

In 2005, after separately meeting Dr. Maurice Hinson and Dr. E.L. Lancaster at workshops in which each presented, at UTM and Union University respectively, Nelson once again embarked on a new career path, this time as an editor. Long after her UTM retirement, Nelson continued to attend workshops and musical events at UTM and around the State of Tennessee. Since 2005, Nelson has co-edited seventeen ensemble publications with Dr. Maurice Hinson. These books all reflect the attention to detail and the seriousness that Nelson brought to her career as a performer and teacher. In 2015, at the age of eighty-nine, Nelson remains active in her music and arts community and continues to share her knowledge with a broad musical audience through her editing work for Alfred Music.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **CONTRIBUTIONS AS A PIANIST**

#### **Young Artist (1938-1949)**

##### *AUSTRALIA*

Nelson began the year 1938 as a ten-year-old who was poised for a significant career as a pianist. With the help of her teacher, Jessica Dix, Nelson exceeded expectations in all of the performances that arose during this time. She debuted as a solo pianist in 1938 in Adelaide Town Hall, the same performance venue used by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, with a lengthy piano recital of advanced repertoire. In that recital, Nelson performed works by Beethoven, Bach, Schumann, Liszt and Chopin, with one newspaper claiming in advance that the young pianist would “surprise her listeners with her wonderful technique, remarkable personality, and phenomenal memory.” The following year, on Saturday, October 21, 1939, she performed again at Adelaide Town Hall and received a more complete review that evidenced growing performance skills:

Her memory and technical accuracy were surprisingly reliable; and the fact that she could face her large audience without any apparent signs of nervousness,

and play through an exacting programme with such conspicuous success, suggests that she already has that mental and physical endurance essential for a concert career.

... Opening her programme with “Pastorale” and *Sonata* in A (Scarlatti), Allison Nelson displayed charm of style and digital brilliance. In the contrapuntal writing of Bach (she played both the *Prelude and Fugue* in F minor and B flat major), the part playing was clean and there were excellent tonal gradations. In Mozart’s *Sonata in F Major*, K. 332, her well-marked rhythm, and effective dynamic contrasts, were features of a fine performance, which also included appealing cantabile playing. An encore was demanded—Rondo alla Turca (Mozart) being played with éclat.

Chopin’s lovely *Nocturne in F sharp Major* was musical and fluent technically, and *Etude in F Minor* (Liszt), which received a curious dearth of applause, displayed this young pianist’s extraordinary powers of virtuosity. *The Island Spell* (John Ireland) was a most attractive number in a modern group which also included “The Golliwog’s Cakewalk” (Debussy), and an abridged piano version of Ravel’s orchestral *Bolero*. The recitalist’s final offering was the first movement of Mendelssohn’s *Concerto in D Minor*, in which she was accompanied by her teacher, Jessica Dix. Final encores were *Dance of the Gnomes* (Liszt) and *The Girl with the Flaxen Hair* (Debussy).<sup>193</sup>

As the principal keyboard player for ABC, Dix was able to introduce her student to Adelaide and to all of Australia through ABC performances. In the 1930s, ABC established six symphony orchestras, one for each of the six states in Australia. Nelson recalls that each state had two orchestras: a studio orchestra and a separate orchestra that performed live concerts.<sup>194</sup> Her earliest performance opportunities with an orchestra were often with the studio orchestra:

I played Mendelssohn’s D minor *Concerto*. Later on I played Saint-Saëns G minor *Concerto*, but at this age it was mostly Beethoven and Mendelssohn. The early ones. And I played those with the Adelaide Australian Broadcasting

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<sup>193</sup> H. Brewster Jones, review of recital performance by Allison Nelson on October 21, 1939, Adelaide Town Hall, Adelaide, Australia, *The Advertiser*, “Young Pianist’s Success – Allison Nelson Holds Town Hall Audience,” October 23, 1939, in the Trove, National Library of Australia, accessed October 17, 2014, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/49821297>.

<sup>194</sup> Nelson, “Remembering Serkin.”

Commission Orchestra. Not in a public performance, but in a studio performance with the Symphony.<sup>195</sup>

Nelson's first major performance with orchestra occurred on January 28, 1941, age thirteen, when she performed with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra on a live radio broadcast for ABC<sup>196</sup> where she played Mendelssohn's *Piano Concerto No. 2 in D minor*, Op. 40. One month later she repeated this performance on the radio with the ABC studio orchestra and a review states,

At one end of the barely-furnished, cream painted studio the 100 or so people privileged to listen to the broadcast were seated, at the other end the orchestra was grouped about Allison Nelson, who sat at the piano with perfect composure, her shoulders covered with a white velvet cloak to keep her warm while she listened to the orchestral items that preceded her own. Far from being nervous, she appeared to be thoroughly enjoying herself during the concerto; an occasional glance passed between her and the conductor William Cade; once she smiled at a particularly lovely passage. Throughout the performance she played so brilliantly, expressively, and surely that her listeners never suffered a moment's doubt or nervousness on her behalf.<sup>197</sup>

Nelson would later perform the same concerto with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra on December 19, 1942.<sup>198</sup>

In early 1942, age fourteen, Nelson gave her first piano ensemble performance on the "Youth Show," a weekly variety show broadcast on radio by ABC featuring talented young artists.<sup>199</sup> For this broadcast Nelson played the "Waltz" (from *Suite for*

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<sup>195</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.

<sup>196</sup> Nelson, email, February 17, 2015.

<sup>197</sup> *The Barrier Daily Truth*, "Portrait of a Young Pianist: Allison Nelson," Broken Hill, New South Wales, Australia, February 26, 1941, 4, in the Trove, National Library of Australia, accessed February 23, 2015, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/141580303>.

<sup>198</sup> *The Barrier*, "Portrait of a Young Pianist," 4.

<sup>199</sup> Nelson, email, February 17, 2015.

*Two Pianos*, Op.15) by Anton Arensky with Richard Farrell. In August of 1942, age fifteen, Nelson performed her first chamber work, Haydn's *Piano Trio No. 39 in G major*, Hob. XV: 25 '*Hungarian (Gypsy)*' with Carmel Hackendorf and Natalie Sellick. The following August, this same trio performed Mozart's *Trio for Piano, Violin and Cello in G major*, K. 496 and Mendelssohn's *Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor*, Op. 49.

Nelson's early performance experiences, including solo, ensemble, chamber and with orchestra, all facilitated her rapid development towards becoming an exceptional pianist. At the end of 1943 Nelson completed the first year of her bachelor of music degree program with honors at the University of Adelaide, capping a busy and productive year for the sixteen-year-old.<sup>200</sup> It is therefore no surprise that by 1944, age seventeen, expectations for Nelson's career as a pianist were building. This is confirmed in a newspaper article following her June 9, 1944 solo recital at Newcastle Town Hall in New South Wales, Australia, as follows:

A wisp of a girl with long, fair hair tied in blue ribbons, Allison Nelson, 16-year-old [*sic*] Adelaide pianist, roused a big audience at the City Hall last night to enthusiastic admiration, first, of her technical skill, principally of her courage. For it was a courageous gesture for her to play the Beethoven *Sonata*, Opus 110. If she did not penetrate to the very soul of Beethoven her fault was that of a 16-year-old [*sic*] failing to reveal the tempestuous spirit of one of the greatest geniuses the world has ever produced-the spirit that has evaded all but the greatest of mature, sincere musicians. She may become one of them.

Lavish predictions have been made of Miss Nelson's career. And they could not be exaggerated. Regardless of age, her technical skill borders on greatness. Her effortless flow of music, unifying her and her piano, leaves this elfin creature apparently fresh at the end of an exacting performance, and willing to play an encore for a clamouring audience.

In the romantic music of Brahms and the impressionist painting of Debussy, Miss Nelson was closest to the spirit of the music. In her two capriccios, Opus 76 of Brahms, she portrayed with genuine sympathy the restless moods and rich colourings of the first, the playfulness of the second.

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<sup>200</sup> Nelson, email, February 17, 2015.

The cascading rhythms of Ravel's *Jeux d'Eux* and the deftly-sketched *Cathedrale Engloutie* of Debussy, left a lasting impression.

The sheer brilliance of Miss Nelson's technical skill was fully revealed in her interpretation of her first work, the dynamic *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor*, of Bach.<sup>201</sup>

Less than two months after this Newcastle Town Hall performance in June of 1944, Nelson gave a solo concert in Winthrop Hall at the University of West Australia in Perth, described in a newspaper announcement on August 1, 1944:

An ambitious programme which ranges from Bach to Ravel has been chosen by Miss Allison Nelson, the 16-year-old [*sic*] South Australian pianist, for her recital at the Winthrop Hall on Saturday night. She will open with two compositions by Bach "Mortify Us By Thy Grace" (arranged by Rummel) and *Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor* (arranged by Liszt), which will be followed by the well-known Beethoven *Sonata in F Minor*, Op. 57 (the "Appassionata"). The romantics and a modern will be featured on the second half of her programme, which will comprise *Polonaise in A Flat* Op. 53 (Chopin), *La Campanella* (Paganini-Liszt) and *Sonatine* by Ravel. Her associate artist will be the soprano Miss Alice Mallon. The young pianist, who is under contract to the ABC, will also be heard in the Beethoven C Minor *Concerto* with the Perth Symphony Orchestra on August 12.<sup>202</sup>

As indicated in this media announcement, Nelson performed with the Perth Symphony Orchestra less than two weeks later on August 12, 1944. Nelson's solo performance in Perth, at University of West Australia, was well-received by audience and critics. This review was published on August 11, 1944, following her recital:

A Perth critic said that firm control, superlative sheer fluency, attractive musical tone, and a keen rhythmic sense were features of the young pianist's playing in a highly exacting programme. "When she began the Bach fugue it was at such a

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<sup>201</sup> *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, "Rare Technical Skill - Allison Nelson Concert," Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia, June 10, 1944, in the Trove, National Library of Australia, accessed October 17, 2014, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/134921351>. Although this review gives Nelson's age as sixteen, she had turned seventeen on April 22, 1944, prior to the reviewed performance.

<sup>202</sup> *The West Australian*, "Pianoforte Recital," Perth, Australia, August 1, 1944, in the Trove, National Library of Australia, accessed October 16, 2014, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/44817831>. Although this review also gives Nelson's age as sixteen, she had turned seventeen on April 22, 1944, prior to the reviewed performance.

pace that one almost trembled for the consequences, but she kept it up unflinching, and with exemplary clarity through all its developments.”<sup>203</sup>

As part of her ABC tour in the spring and summer of 1944, Nelson had many orchestral performance opportunities with distinguished conductors and orchestras. Among these were her two performances with Sydney Symphony Orchestra under the direction of the highly-acclaimed Eugene Ormandy, music director of Philadelphia Orchestra. These concerts were enthusiastically reported on in the local Adelaide newspaper on May 29, 1944:

Shortly after her arrival in Sydney today, Allison Nelson, the young South Australian pianist, achieved one of her ambitions; she had met Eugene Ormandy, the famous American conductor, with whom she will be associated in Sydney in two ABC symphony orchestra concerts, and she added his autograph to her book containing the signatures of many musicians, including Sir Malcolm Sargent, Marjorie Lawrence and Laurence Tibbet.

The conductor and the young soloist met at the ABC studio, and, after listening to her play from César Franck’s *Symphonique Variations*, Ormandy said that she had great talent, and would make a wonderful concert pianist. Ormandy said that he was very happy to have such a young soloist as he was particularly interested in children’s orchestras in America.

“Once I had a soloist only six years old,” he said. “We have a wealth of young talent in Philadelphia.”<sup>204</sup>

As stated, Nelson performed César Franck’s *Variations Symphoniques* with Sydney Symphony led by Ormandy, with performances separated by only a few days.<sup>205</sup> During this same tour in 1944, Nelson performed with Brisbane Symphony under American conductor Edwin McArthur, playing Camille Saint-Saëns’ *Piano Concerto No. 2 in G*

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<sup>203</sup> *The Advertiser*, “Allison Nelson’s Concert in Perth,” Adelaide, Australia, August 11, 1944, in the Trove, National Library of Australia, accessed October 16, 2014, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/43215683>.

<sup>204</sup> *The Advertiser*, Adelaide, Australia, May 29, 1944, 5, in the Trove, National Library of Australia, accessed October 6, 2014, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/74631533>.

<sup>205</sup> Nelson, interview, January 7, 2015.



*minor*, Op.22. On the same tour Nelson performed Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor*, Op. 37, as noted earlier with Perth Symphony Orchestra on August 12, 1944. This major tour in 1944 was her last in Australia before leaving for the United States to attend the Curtis Institute as a direct result of her collaborations with Eugene Ormandy. Ormandy was impressed with Nelson's playing during her tour with the Sydney Symphony and he arranged for her to attend the Curtis Institute to study with Rudolf Serkin without an audition.

#### *RUDOLF SERKIN AND THE CURTIS INSTITUTE*

Immediately after arriving in Philadelphia in September of 1944 at the age of seventeen, Nelson began her studies with Rudolf Serkin at the Curtis Institute, spending five years as his pupil. Nelson's performance opportunities were more typical of a conservatory student than a touring pianist as she had experienced while in Australia. An exception was Nelson's opportunity to perform Franck's *Variations Symphoniques* with Ormandy again, this time with the Philadelphia Orchestra on March 7, 1946, age eighteen, as a result of Nelson winning the 1945 Philadelphia Symphony Youth Auditions. Playing *Variations Symphoniques* once again was not Nelson's idea, but as she described, Ormandy "didn't like [her] selections and settled for the Franck *Symphonic Variations*." Yet not long after this performance, she mentions that "we played it again at the Naval Hospital in New Jersey."<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

Student recitals at the Curtis Institute constituted Nelson's most frequent performance opportunities from 1944 to 1949. She appeared both as a soloist and occasionally as a chamber musician or a member of a piano duo. Many of these concerts may be found listed in program archives at the Curtis Institute. For example, at a "Students' Concert" on April 2, 1946, Nelson performed the Brahms *Klavierstücke*, Op. 118; and on March 6, 1947, Nelson played Mendelssohn's *Variations Serieuses in D minor*, Op. 54 and two works by Chopin: *Etude in E major*, Op. 10, No. 3 and *Ballade No. 1 in G minor*, Op. 23.<sup>207</sup> In April and December of 1947 Nelson also accompanied opera recitals at the Curtis Institute.<sup>208</sup> On February 24, 1948, Nelson played the following pieces: *Fugue in G minor* and *Sonata in A major* by Domenico Scarlatti; Chopin's *Fantasie in F minor*, Op. 49, and Bohuslav Martinu's *Preludes* for Piano.<sup>209</sup>

In her last year at Curtis, 1949, age twenty-one to twenty-two, Nelson performed in student recitals on two occasions. On March 4, 1949, she played Mozart's *Sonata for Two Pianos in D Major*, K. 448, collaborating with Curtis student Eleanor Lipkin on a student recital. The two pianists also played Rachmaninoff's challenging *Suite No. 2*, Op. 17 for two pianos. Less than two weeks later Nelson performed her graduation recital on March 16, 1949, a joint recital with Curtis student and violinist Giuseppe

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<sup>207</sup> Internet Archive, "Recital programs 1945-46; 1946-47; 1947-48 (1945)," accessed February 1, 2015, <https://archive.org/details/recitalprograms4851curt>.

<sup>208</sup> Internet Archive, "Recital programs (1945)."

<sup>209</sup> Internet Archive, "Recital programs (1945)."

Cusimano. Nelson performed Beethoven's *Piano Sonata in E minor*, Op. 90 as well as Brahms' *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Handel*, Op. 24.<sup>210</sup>

Nelson's years at Curtis were a collection of dedication to practice, performances and exposure to fine music and well-known musicians. Eugene Ormandy as the equivalent of a musical foster parent to Nelson added greatly to Nelson's introduction to other professional musicians of the time. For example, Nelson writes that at the end of her first summer, Ormandy drove her from Lake Placid, New York, back to Philadelphia in the company of Ormandy's close friend and famous cellist Gregor Piatigorsky. While on that drive home the two men "tricked [her] into drinking buttermilk. [She] thought it tasted awful - they thought it was very funny and laughed a lot."<sup>211</sup> Nelson's years at the Curtis Institute and her tutelage under Rudolf Serkin prepared Nelson for a lasting career as a serious musician. The ambitious ten-year-old pianist who, in 1938, gave her first major public performance in Adelaide Town Hall was now ready, at age twenty-two, to undertake a mature, professional career in music.

### **Nelson and Neal, the Piano Duo (1949-1968)**

Before their marriage on January 1, 1949, Allison Nelson, age twenty-one, and Harry Neal had already begun a musical collaboration. In 1948 the couple was hired to "do a weekly television program as a two-piano team" from the WCAU-TV studio (a CBS affiliate) in Philadelphia where Harry Neal worked, first as a stage hand and later

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<sup>210</sup> Internet Archive, "Recital programs (1948)."

<sup>211</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

as a manager.<sup>212</sup> Their television program aired on Sunday afternoons and one episode, described in *Variety* magazine, provides an early account of the piano duo of Nelson and Neal:

Allison Nelson and Harry Neal, attractive young husband-and-wife piano duo, have a pleasing and informal quarter-hour program of classical and modern works on WCAU-TV. ... Each week they present a new artist. This week the young Hungarian soprano, Klara Bolgar, sang "Villanelle," by Eva Dell Acqua. ... Neal at start of program remarked that public claims to want more culture on television, but few take the trouble to send in letters and request good music.<sup>213</sup>

Their professional and personal partnership would last twenty years until Harry Neal's death in 1968, but their extensive career together offers great insight into both the professional and musical aspects of performing duo piano works.

#### *GETTING STARTED*

Nelson and Neal as duo partners proved to be successful in discovering their potential and ability to make a career by performing together, and the couple turned their full attention to working together on a duo career in 1950. They were able to arrange a contract with ABC for a series of two-piano recitals on the ABC coast-to-coast radio network.<sup>214</sup> The couple stayed in Australia for nearly a year between 1950 and 1951 to perform under that contract and returned to Tennessee, Neal's home state. During that time in Australia playing as a duo, the couple found that as performers they

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<sup>212</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 115.

<sup>213</sup> *Variety*, Los Angeles, California, "Nelson and Neal," Penske Business Media, February 8, 1950, 62, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/docview/1285957755>.

<sup>214</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 117.

“drew confidence from one another, and enjoyed [themselves] enormously.”<sup>215</sup>

Pragmatism was also an issue for the married couple. Nelson did not feel that a duo career would be at all limiting and acknowledges that playing as a duo “was the way we could make a living.”<sup>216</sup>

In the summer of 1951, age twenty-four, Nelson and Neal decided to stay in Tennessee and begin a more extensive touring career as a duo. Nelson recalls that there may have been “three or four good piano duos at the time who were performing for a living; and we felt that there was room for us to play to make a living, but we had to do something unique.”<sup>217</sup> It was this desire for an unprecedented approach to performing as a duo that led to the couple’s decision to purchase two Baldwin grand pianos and carry “the pianos with [them] personally.”<sup>218</sup> They considered moving to New York City as most other professional musicians did at the time, but as Harry Neal stated “the artistic congestion of New York indicated a vacuum of talent in the hinterlands.”<sup>219</sup>

With that in mind, the couple launched their duo career from Paris, Tennessee, the home of Neal’s parents, in a series of nine summer performances that were arranged with the help of Harry Neal’s mother. They played numerous concerts in smaller venues in towns such as Dahlonega, Georgia, Auburn, Alabama, Cullowhee, North Carolina, and Shelbyville, Tennessee. Yet at the same time they also played in New Orleans and

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<sup>215</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 121.

<sup>216</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>217</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>218</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>219</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 130.

performed before a crowd of 4,500 people at the Chautauqua Institution in southwestern New York.<sup>220</sup> It was a modest beginning for the duo and certainly not without its difficulties. Nelson recalls that, “We started out just with our little truck and with the two five foot Baldwins inside.”<sup>221</sup>

Although the performance fees for these first nine performances were not substantial, the duo was well received by their audiences. The young couple worked industriously on their craft to understand how to effectively collaborate together. They were thoughtful about selecting the appropriate repertoire, noting that, “It is up to the artist to design a program which satisfies the audience’s requirements while living up to his own standards.”<sup>222</sup>

As the couple prepared for their first significant tour in 1951-1952, in which they would eventually play sixty-six engagements, Nelson and Neal considered hiring a professional manager. After speaking with many friends and several professional managers and management companies, they hired their first successful regional management company, the Alkahest Celebrity Bureau based in Atlanta. Ralph Bridges of Alkahest would shortly thereafter recommend the duo to others at an annual conference of regional managers in New York. After auditioning for these managers, the duo was promptly engaged by each of the regional managers present—Alkahest in Atlanta, Pryor-Menz in Iowa, the University of Minnesota, The Virginia Orchestra Guild and Celebrity Artists of New York—which led to performance guarantees for the

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<sup>220</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 121.

<sup>221</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>222</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 145.

1952-53 season which eventually resulted in 103 engagements and dramatically improved their income and future performance prospects.

Nelson and Neal continued at this aggressive performance pace for the balance of their duo career, playing approximately 1,500 concerts together. A performance season for Nelson and Neal stretched from the fall to the spring as they toured by truck or bus moving and tuning their own pianos for each performance. Their active performance schedule was extreme by any standard. Harry Neal described their touring regimen that allowed for so many performances per season in the following way:

A hundred recitals—three to six a week—from October through early May. The pattern for each of these concert days is almost identical: two or three hundred miles’ driving (five to eight hours), unloading pianos (one hour), tuning them (thirty minutes to two hours), concert (two hours), and reloading pianos (one hour). In addition there is a late-night reception after almost every engagement, plus assorted eating, practice, dressing and resting. No wonder Heifetz said a concert artist should have the constitution of a horse.<sup>223</sup>

#### *PERFORMANCE STANDARDS*

In their first touring season, Nelson and Neal decided to focus on playing “good music” regardless of whether all their audiences would understand the music they performed; but quickly thereafter recognized that accommodations had to be made in their repertoire depending on the sophistication of their audience.<sup>224</sup> They also worked meticulously to give their best performance possible in every town and venue, regardless of the audience or the circumstances because they wanted to get repeat

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<sup>223</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 154.

<sup>224</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 130.

bookings.<sup>225</sup> This attitude remained with Nelson for the rest of her career. For example, Nelson recalls that for one of her first performances after Harry Neal's death, she was invited to a small school in Mississippi where they had only a spinet for her to play. In characteristic fashion, her response was, "this is what they're used to listening to, and I should make it sound better than they had ever heard it played before."<sup>226</sup>

This insistence on providing their best in each performance became characteristic of Nelson and Neal. It is likely that the duo's success resulted from the standard of their duo playing; a quality that drew from their preparations and sound production. Nelson offers insight into their process by explaining her approach to piano ensemble playing which developed during the Nelson and Neal years:

One of the most important elements of duet playing—when I say duet I mean both four hands and two pianos—is that your ear is trained to listen to somebody outside of what you are doing at the keyboard. Now basically when you know the music and your fingers are trained, you play automatically unless you are listening to something. And in duet playing, in duo and duet playing, you have to listen to the other person so that the end result of the two instruments together, the two players together, make a musical whole. This is what you want from the music—what comes out of the two players together. You cannot any longer just listen to yourself and you cannot just listen only to the other player. You have to listen to the complete result of both players and the music that they can make together.<sup>227</sup>

Both performers were committed to thorough practice and rehearsals for their performances. A key part of their successful preparations came from what Neal described as a "ruthless frankness."<sup>228</sup> Harry Neal had great respect for his wife's

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<sup>225</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 143.

<sup>226</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>227</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>228</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 161.



technical and artistic skills and recounts that she helped him cure many bad habits as a pianist, including these examples from their early practice sessions together:

“For Pete’s sake,” she cried, “keep your mouth shut while you play. It looks kind of simple.”

“Slow practice is easy,” she said, “but don’t pussyfoot. Work hard every moment!” Warning me not to bump the last note of my phrases, she compared it to giving a sharp accent on the last word of a sentence. “Sounds silly, doesn’t it? Don’t wander aimlessly. Go to the end of your phrase with a purpose, but don’t let yourself clench the last note with a bang once you get there. Your fingers may want to do it, but that’s *pianistic*, not *musical* playing.”<sup>229</sup>

Their focus on producing quality music, working hard at every performance and structuring programs that satisfied audiences continued throughout their career.

A selection of performance announcements in local newspapers demonstrates that Nelson and Neal pleased audiences well enough to perform at many venues, repeatedly, over the years. For example, newspaper articles reveal performances at Morris Brown College, in Atlanta, in 1952, 1953 and 1956.<sup>230</sup> One of these announcements also provides an early example of the way the duo promoted and emphasized their unique approach to touring, noting that the duo would

...use their own matched concert grand pianos for this concert, since they travel in a specially-built truck. This same vehicle transported the team and their

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<sup>229</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 161.

<sup>230</sup> *Atlanta Daily World*, “Nelson and Neal Duo-Piano Team at MBC Oct. 26,” Atlanta, Georgia, October 19, 1952, 7, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/docview/490988360>; *Atlanta Daily World*, “Nelson and Neal Concert Series to Open M.B.,” Atlanta, Georgia, October 11, 1953, 3, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/docview/491013005>; and *Atlanta Daily World*, “Australian-American Team to Appear at Morris Brown,” Atlanta, Georgia, March 16, 1956, 3, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/docview/491080426>.

pianos for their record-breaking tour during the 1952-53 season when Nelson and Neal filled over 100 concert engagements from coast to coast.<sup>231</sup>

The duo's touring repertoire was also known to satisfy audiences of all types. A glimpse of this early repertoire from a performance at Clark College in Atlanta, Georgia (later, Clark Atlanta University), in 1951, shows that the duo played Bach's *Fugue* in G Minor and Schumann's *Andante and Variations* as their opening pieces before finishing with Poulenc's *Sonata for Piano Four Hands* ("Prelude", "Rustique" and "Final"), Babin's *Three Etudes*, Brahms' *Five Hungarian Dances*, Copland's "Saturday Night Waltz" and "Hoe Down", and Mario Braggiotti's *Variations on Yankee Doodle For Two Pianos, Four Hands in the manner of Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Debussy, and Gershwin*.<sup>232</sup>

#### *NEW YORK DEBUT AND PROMOTION OF THE DUO*

Another significant aspect of the duo's popular success was their focus on career growth, marketing, recognition and acquiring top level professional management. To this end Nelson and Neal carefully made arrangements for their New York debut, which took place in the fall of 1953, before their 1953-1954 tour dates would begin. They made these arrangements with the help of their manager, Ralph Bridges (Alkahest Celebrity Bureau) and David Libidins, recital manager for Kenneth Allen, for a recital at New York's Town Hall to take place in October of 1953.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> *Atlanta Daily World*, "Nelson and Neal Concert," 3.

<sup>232</sup> *Atlanta Daily World*, Atlanta, Georgia, "Clark Concert to Feature Two Piano artists," October 14, 1951, 2, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, accessed January 31, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/docview/490954655>.

<sup>233</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 172.

For New York's Town Hall, the couple took some chances with their program, choosing to begin their performance with three contemporary works, rather than to use a chronological ordering of the music. Their program began with Bernhard Heiden's *Sonata for Piano Four Hands*, George Rochberg's *Capriccio for Two Pianos* (which the composer had dedicated to the couple), and Benjamin Britten's *Introduction and Rondo alla Burlesca*. Harry Neal recounts that each of these three composers personally wrote the program notes for his music.<sup>234</sup> Following the intermission, the couple played Bach's *Little Fugue in G Minor*, Chopin's *Rondo*, Op. 73, and the Brahms *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*.<sup>235</sup>

This New York debut performance received, on balance, favorable reviews although Howard Taubman, reviewer for the *New York Times*, seemed bothered by the "contemporary music" on their program with many "pieces written no earlier than 1940."<sup>236</sup> Most other reviewers gushed. "The duo-pianists showed keen musical insight as well as a mellifluous approach to the keyboard. They performed with a relaxation which spelled intellectual and emotional rapport, together with joy in their job."<sup>237</sup> "These young pianists made an excellent pair of ensemble players. Their work always

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<sup>234</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 160.

<sup>235</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 160.

<sup>236</sup> Howard Taubman, "Duo-Pianists Make Town Hall Debut: Allison Nelson and Harry Neal, Husband-Wife Team, Perform Capriccio by Rochberg," *New York Times*, October 7, 1953, 36, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/docview/112753605>.

<sup>237</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 179, quoting from a review by Harriett Johnson in the *New York Post*.

showed the quality of unanimity.”<sup>238</sup> “Providing novelty not only themselves but also in their program-making, they won immediate favor for the freshness and the quality of their performance.”<sup>239</sup>

The day after those reviews were printed in New York, the Baldwin Piano Company presented Nelson and Neal with a receipt for the two matched Baldwin concert grand pianos that the couple had played on at Town Hall. In connection with this gift, the Baldwin representative stated, “The Baldwin Piano Company is presenting you with these two beautifully matched instruments, for we feel you will be as much a credit to them as they will be to you.”<sup>240</sup> Nelson recalls that the “Baldwin people were always very nice to us.... At first ... they gave us a good price on our little five foot instruments. Then as our career developed they started providing us with concert grands at no cost to us.”<sup>241</sup>

The success of their New York debut performance brought the duo many more years of work on tour and eventually set them up with a pair of professional managers who each covered different regions for bookings. The couple continued working with Ralph Bridges out of Atlanta as the manager of their southeastern engagements, consolidating all of their other management with the National artists Corporation in

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<sup>238</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 179, quoting from a review by Robert Bagar in the *World-Telegram*.

<sup>239</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 180, quoting from a review by Miles Kastendieck in the *Journal-American*.

<sup>240</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 180.

<sup>241</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

New York beginning with their 1956-57 season.<sup>242</sup> This approach continued to keep the couple busy with approximately 100 paid concerts each year.

Public recognition helped their career as well. In 1956, Nelson and Neal were the subject of a featured article in *Ladies Home Journal*<sup>243</sup> and in 1960 they were again the subject of a featured article, this time in *Coronet*.<sup>244</sup> In 1958 the couple hired Alix Williamson, a New York music publicist.<sup>245</sup> Prior to 1958 Nelson and Neal had done all their own publicity. Nevertheless, they hired Alix Williamson in 1958 on a one year contract as their publicity agent with the express purpose of developing their careers further and getting them even more exposure nationally. Nelson explains that “we hired her for a year to help develop our career,” and to “develop and improve our reputation and our programmability.”<sup>246</sup> One of the promotional successes that Williamson accomplished on their behalf was the couple’s selection as the subject of a television episode as the featured guests on *This is Your Life*, hosted by Ralph Edwards on NBC.

That television show was designed to surprise its subjects and to honor their achievements with a program about their lives. Indeed, as Nelson notes, the actual

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<sup>242</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 197.

<sup>243</sup> Peta J. Fuller, “How Young America Lives: *Wave as You Pass*,” *Ladies Home Journal*, January 1956.

<sup>244</sup> Richard Kaplan, “Musical Family on Wheels,” *Coronet*, February 1960.

<sup>245</sup> Alix Williamson (1916-2001) was a “classical music publicist who helped promote and shape the careers of legendary musicians from Lotte Lehmann to the Trapp Family Singers.” Anne Midgette, “Alix Williamson, 85, Publicist For Noted Singers and Musicians,” *New York Times*, Arts, August 31, 2001, accessed February 23, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/08/31/arts/alix-williamson-85-publicist-for-noted-singers-and-musicians.html>.

<sup>246</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

staging of the television program was a surprise, but it did not happen without the help of their publicity agent working behind the scenes. By the time the television program was filmed, Nelson and Neal were actively pursuing other possible publicity events or programs as well. The couple had been to New York to meet with a movie producer to see if their story was “suitable for a movie.”<sup>247</sup> They also interviewed producers to see if their lives could be made into a television series.<sup>248</sup> In explaining this process, Nelson recounts the way events unfolded for their television appearance:

So there were lots of things involved and going to California for *This is Your Life*, well, we were told just to show up at the studio in California and be ready to perform. And we didn’t know what was going to come of this but it’s an audition for something to do in California. So we did that. Showed up with our pianos set up.<sup>249</sup>

The nationally broadcast program celebrated their professional lives and their success as a piano duo, with the episode airing nationally on January 14, 1959.<sup>250</sup>

A review of the duo’s performance success and longevity must be attributed in part to the couple’s appreciation for the need to promote themselves consistently. Their early decision to tour by highway with grand pianos in tow was largely driven by pragmatics—using Paris, Tennessee, as their home base and catering to smaller venues with less sophisticated audiences. However, their determination to continue touring in

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<sup>247</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>248</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>249</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>250</sup> Classic TV Info, “This is Your Life,” accessed October 12, 2014, <http://www.classictvinfo.com/ThisIsYourLife/TIYLEpisodeList.htm>.

this fashion as they raised a family became the duo's signature and a key component of their promotional and career success.

Despite a ceaselessly busy career pace, the couple managed to have three children between 1954 and 1957. A custom-made tour bus accommodated their family needs by keeping their family together and became a featured aspect of their career marketing. Nelson recalls that they explained in one program "what vehicle we had, what kind of pianos we had, how many children we had..." and featured the non-traditional aspects of their professional touring arrangements in addition to their performance achievements.<sup>251</sup> Touring as a family and promoting this facet of their duo career was not planned, rather, "it just gradually grew over several years and this is how it changed when [they] had children."<sup>252</sup>

#### *DUO REPERTOIRE CONSIDERATIONS*

The piano ensemble repertoire performed by Nelson and Neal, whether for their debut performance in New York or for less high profile audiences in other venues, was chosen and developed with characteristic thought and analysis. They reserved the longer Mozart *Sonata in D major*, K. 448, for more sophisticated audiences, deciding that less experienced audiences would tire from its length (twenty-five minutes).<sup>253</sup> They enjoyed performing duets as well as two-piano works, including the Mozart sonatas for

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<sup>251</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>252</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>253</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 159.

one piano, four hands, Schubert's *Fantasy in F minor*, Op. 103, and *Children's Games* by Bizet. Nelson and Neal programmed popular works such as Brahms *Hungarian Dances* and Schubert's *Marche Militaire*, works originally written in four-hand form, to create familiarity amongst audiences<sup>254</sup> And while the duo disliked arrangements, they occasionally performed works arranged originally by the composer in two-piano form, such as Brahms' *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*, Debussy's *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* and Ravel's *La Valse*.<sup>255</sup>

On their annual tours, to adapt to less refined audiences, Nelson and Neal carefully planned their programs to include six to eight works each and tried to play at least one four-hand piece on each program.<sup>256</sup> They programmed and played *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* by Debussy, *La Valse* by Ravel, the Brahms *Hungarian Dances*, Mozart's *Concerto in E-flat major*, K. 365, and Schubert's *Marche Militaire*. According to Neal, their favorite composition was *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* by Brahms.<sup>257</sup> In 1955 when Nelson and Neal auditioned for a new potential manager in New York, Andre Mertens, they again carefully chose a program of pieces that had to be thirty minutes in length. This program included *Fantasy in F minor* by Franz Schubert, *Etude No. 1* for two pianos by Victor Babin, and *Variations on Yankee Doodle* by Mario Braggiotti.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 159.

<sup>255</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 159.

<sup>256</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 158.

<sup>257</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 159.

<sup>258</sup> Neal, *Wave as You Pass*, 195.



It is fair to conclude that Nelson and Neal became experts at understanding their audiences as well as programming and performing music that would create memorable concert experiences. This is supported by their facility for obtaining repeat engagements and the mere fact that their managers were able to arrange nearly 100 concerts per year over a long period of time. The duo's active performance career speaks volumes to their ability to perform at a consistently high level over time. Nelson clearly established herself during this period as a sought-after duo performer and as a fine pianist and musician. Harry Neal's death in September of 1968 ended the duo's long run as a successful performance partnership and began a personal and professional transition for Nelson that would see her become artist-in-residence and full time faculty at UTM beginning in the fall of 1971.

### **University of Tennessee at Martin and Following Years (1969-)**

Following Harry Neal's passing in late 1968, Nelson re-examined her career options at age forty-one and considered how to make a living as a pianist with herself and three children to support. She had part-time work available at UTM near her home and the bookings originally scheduled for Nelson and Neal as a duo that had to be canceled. In the spring of 1969 Nelson was able to rebook the duo engagements originally intended for Nelson and Neal and performed solo recitals in their place. For these performances, Nelson notes that she "felt more secure" at first by returning to "music that [she] was already familiar with and that [she] had played before."<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

However, she did add some new music by opening “the program with the Mozart *Fantasy in D minor* [K. 397],” which she says was a good experience that changed her attitude about the piece and would later affect the way she taught the piece to students.<sup>260</sup>

Forced to do everything at that time for herself, Nelson became more self-reliant and resourceful. She recalls that the challenges she faced caused her to take on a different attitude as a performer:

When I went through my transition from playing duos to playing solos... it occurred to me for the first time in my life that I was playing because of the way I thought it should be played. ...It gave me pleasure. It gave me satisfaction, emotionally. And my attitude became: This is what I’m offering to the audience and if they don’t like it, tough. If they don’t like the way I play, they shouldn’t be there listening. ... That I’m playing for my satisfaction, not for the audience’s satisfaction. And I guess that’s been my attitude ever since. For the last forty-five years. And I know what the music should sound like. I know what I’m trying to express with it. And if you don’t like it...you don’t have to listen.<sup>261</sup>

Between 1969 and 1971 Nelson continued to perform professionally as a soloist.

Sometimes these performances were solo engagements at venues that Nelson and Neal had played in the past as a duo, and sometimes these performances were part of a workshop or teaching engagement at a college or university that also required her to give a recital. The practicalities of providing for her family led Nelson to accept the full-time position as artist-in-residence at UTM in the fall of 1971.

Beginning in 1971 with her artist-in-residence position at UTM, Nelson’s performance activities changed. Although she no longer had to earn a living as a touring performer, Nelson adapted in characteristic fashion to her new responsibilities as

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<sup>260</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>261</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

UTM's artist-in-residence, keeping active as a performer and teacher. Nelson summarizes those duties as follows:

... [L]ots of master classes. Lots of speaking engagements. When I was still at UTM... I played in the University Trio. I accompanied the voice teachers. Collaborative playing with the voice teachers with these enormous programs that we did. Played solo concerts myself. Played chamber music if they had a visiting chamber music person like the Blair Quartet, I played with them. And I was playing constantly, all the time that I was on the faculty, played all of the time. Whenever they needed a good piano part, I got to play.<sup>262</sup>

Nelson was a frequent performer during her years at UTM and continued to perform in ensembles. "Bob Stewart and I played some two piano stuff. We did the [Béla] Bartók *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion*. We had a good percussion department."<sup>263</sup> UTM did not have a string program, presenting new and interesting challenges for Nelson.<sup>264</sup> The music department at UTM had "lots of band instruments" as well as piano and voice, but "what do you do if you don't have strings?"<sup>265</sup> Nelson recalls that you "have to make up other things to do to play together," and this is what caused her to collaborate with a flutist and a clarinetist on the faculty to form the University Trio at UTM in 1971.<sup>266</sup>

The University Trio played original works but they also had to play "a lot of arrangements" because there were not enough quality works for this combination of

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<sup>262</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>263</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>264</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>265</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>266</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015. The original members of the University Trio were Nelson, flutist Robert Fleming and clarinetist Gilbert Carp.

ensemble players.<sup>267</sup> Nelson reports that while the trio collaborated and rehearsed for performances in a professional and serious manner, they also had their lighter moments. Following a performance at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, the three performers packed up their equipment in the upstairs auditorium, and when they were ready to leave they found themselves locked inside:

... [T]hey had locked all the buildings and we couldn't get out of the building. And we discovered that off the stage there was a fire escape. There was a door that opened onto a fire escape backstage... so we had to climb down the fire escape in our formal clothes with our instruments to get out of the hall.<sup>268</sup>

Nelson was known as a serious musician and one who could take on any challenge. Dr. Elaine Harris, professor of music at UTM and long-time duo partner of Nelson's while Nelson worked at UTM, explains Nelson's attitude and approach, regardless of her role, as follows:

... she has done here a lot of accompanying that was just superb and she put as much effort into that as she would into a solo program. So it would come out to be a work of art. Soloists she worked with were fortunate to have her. And she would accompany faculty recitals. And if a string quartet came in, she would often be the one who do a piece for piano and strings with them.<sup>269</sup>

Nelson also took on challenges outside the scope of her duties at UTM. For example, while she worked and performed as a pianist and collaborative artist at UTM, she also spent eight years serving as the organist at the small Episcopal Church in Paris, Tennessee:

They had an old-fashioned... Estey organ that did have foot pedals, but it had, there were stops to pull out, and a friend of the church who built organs... had

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<sup>267</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>268</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>269</sup> Elaine Harriss, telephone interview, tape recording, January 24, 2015.

put in a little air blower, an electronic blower to make the sound. So I just had to turn it on and press a key and it made sound.<sup>270</sup>

Nelson's duties at the Episcopal Church included serving as the choir director and choosing hymns. "I tried to arrange Christmas programs. I had students from UT Martin come in and sing Christmas programs. It was a hoot."<sup>271</sup>

Whether in rehearsals or performances, Nelson was more than just a serious musician. It was clear to her colleagues and students that Nelson enjoyed music and the people with whom she worked and performed. For example, Dr. Elaine Harriss observes that as a person, Nelson is "warm and inviting" and "a delight to work with;" and yet as a collaborative artist, Nelson "wants things done just so."<sup>272</sup> Harriss also notes that Nelson insisted they play their pieces, "absolutely as well as possible; almost like the music was sacred."<sup>273</sup> Dr. Kevin Lambert,<sup>274</sup> a collaborative partner of Nelson's remembers that,

[We] had an easy relationship, a fun relationship. There was never a cross word from or to Allison in all the years we worked together, all the rehearsals we had together. We both worked hard; we both wanted to be the very best we could. And she had a very keen sense of humor.<sup>275</sup>

Apart from the personal aspects of their collaboration, Lambert also recalls,

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<sup>270</sup> Allison Nelson, interview by author, tape recording, Jackson, TN, January 10, 2015.

<sup>271</sup> Nelson, interview, January 10, 2015.

<sup>272</sup> Harriss, interview, January 24, 2015.

<sup>273</sup> Harriss, interview, January 24, 2015.

<sup>274</sup> Dr. Lambert is professor of music at Angelo State University (ASU) in San Angelo, Texas. Prior to his time at ASU, he served as director of choral activities and chair of the Department of Music at UTM.

<sup>275</sup> Kevin Lambert, telephone interview, tape recording, January 24, 2015.

Allison was as serious as a heart attack about her piano. ...And she was a meticulous musician and demanding of herself. And it wasn't enough for it to be good, it had to be excellent, and it also had to be right, right in interpretation and fingering and phrasing.<sup>276</sup>

Even though Nelson retired from UTM in 1989, she did not stop performing and collaborating. Her performances with Dr. Lambert, for example, occurred after she retired and after Dr. Lambert joined the UTM faculty in 1990, continuing until 2005.<sup>277</sup> Nelson continued to demonstrate a passion for music and performing long after she gave up her official teaching duties at UTM. In addition, sharing music with others has always been a trademark of Nelson's. Her qualities as a performer and person are perhaps best captured in a story shared by Dr. Lambert concerning a special performance they gave for Harriet Fulton<sup>278</sup> when Fulton's health was failing:

Harriet lived in a house just near campus. ... [She] had started to not do well physically and the end was near. And Allison said, "Can we go over and do our recital for Harriet?" And we went across the street from the university and we went there, and there was a piano in Harriet's living room, and her bedroom was right off the living room. We opened the bedroom door ... and Harriet couldn't hear us but we just sat there and did the whole program for Harriet. And that's the kind of person Allison is.<sup>279</sup>

### **Perspectives on Nelson, the Pianist**

The three distinct periods in Nelson's career allowed her to share somewhat different and diverse contributions as a pianist. First, her work and development as a

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<sup>276</sup> Lambert, interview, January 24, 2015.

<sup>277</sup> Lambert, interview, January 24, 2015.

<sup>278</sup> Dr. Harriet Fulton, long-time faculty and Music Department Chair at UTM, hired Alison Nelson and is the namesake of the Harriett Fulton Theater at UTM.

<sup>279</sup> Lambert, interview, January 24, 2015.

child prodigy from 1938 to 1949 began with her earliest performances in Australia and then her subsequent development in the United States while she studied under Rudolf Serkin at the Curtis Institute. During these formative years, Nelson emerged as a resilient artist, primarily as a soloist, with significant performance experiences. The reviews and news reports of her performances in Australia demonstrate respect and admiration for her talent and dedication as well as recognizable national pride in Nelson as a performer. Her collaboration with ABC on tours and on the radio allowed Nelson to share her performances with audiences all over Australia.

Second, Nelson went on to earn an outstanding international reputation as a pianist during her years of touring as part of the Nelson and Neal piano duo from 1949 until 1968, when Harry Neal died. These years saw Nelson focus entirely on performing piano ensemble repertoire with Neal, with the duo consistently performing from memory, and established her as a professional pianist who gave performances all over the United States and Canada and eventually overseas. The duo's ability to perform in all types of venues, bringing their own quality instruments, made it possible for many audiences to experience a level of high quality performances that they otherwise might not have enjoyed.

The third and final period of Nelson's performance career, from 1969 until her retirement, includes her transition to artist-in-residence at UTM, her years of solo and collaborative performance at UTM and continued collaborative performances following her retirement from UTM. During this third period, Nelson brought her performing standards to Tennessee and enriched the musical atmosphere at UTM as part of her teaching and performing duties. It is clear that her collaborative partners during these

years benefitted from her high standards and it is equally clear that Nelson enjoyed performance collaborations with her colleagues.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CONTRIBUTIONS AS A TEACHER**

#### **Origins and Development as a Teacher**

Allison Nelson was a gifted piano student who, at a young age, also excelled in school and advanced quickly through all of the levels of piano and music theory testing in Australia with the AMEB. This allowed her to begin teaching at an early age. As she recalls,

I actually started teaching when I was about twelve years old. In Australia, because I was so advanced, folks around would say, “Oh would you teach my child?” And I started teaching kids when I was about twelve years old. From that I went to the Settlement School in Philadelphia when I was a student at Curtis and I started teaching at the Settlement School.<sup>280</sup>

Nelson’s first professional teaching experience in the United States was during the Nelson and Neal duo years. The couple taught and coached another pianist couple, Dallas Weekley and Nancy Arganbright.<sup>281</sup> Weekley and Arganbright met Nelson after

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<sup>280</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>281</sup> Dallas Weekley and Nancy Arganbright are a highly regarded piano duet team who concertized throughout the United States and around the world from 1960 to 2000. See “Weekley and Arganbright, Piano Duettists,” [WeekleyandArganbright.com](http://WeekleyandArganbright.com), accessed March 25, 2015, <http://weekleyarganbright.com>. Also see Kimberly Driesbach, “Contributions of Dallas

attending a concert performed by Nelson and Neal in Huntington, Indiana in the fall of 1958. Weekley and Arganbright were impressed with the level of musicianship and high quality performance which they heard from Nelson and Neal at that concert. Weekley and Arganbright asked if Nelson and Neal would come to their house the next day to perform for them, expressing their own interest in a piano ensemble career.<sup>282</sup>

Following that meeting, which included a lesson the next day, Nelson and Neal invited Weekley and Arganbright to study with them in Paris, Tennessee the next summer in 1959. Nelson and Neal found a house for them to rent in Paris, Tennessee and Weekley and Arganbright rented two pianos to practice on, placing them in different rooms so they could practice separately. To their knowledge they were the first professional piano duet team that Nelson and Neal taught.<sup>283</sup>

Weekley and Arganbright felt Nelson was a superb teacher. That first summer they had lessons almost every day or every other day. Speaking of Nelson, Nancy Arganbright offers, “She is a very professional woman. She is organized. She was very secure in what she wanted us to learn and what she was willing to share with us. In this particular medium of four-hands, she had a lot to share.”<sup>284</sup> Arganbright characterizes

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Weekley and Nancy Arganbright to Piano Duet Performance and Literature,” (D.M.A. diss., University of Oklahoma, 2010).

<sup>282</sup> Nancy Arganbright, telephone interview, tape recording, January 24, 2015.

<sup>283</sup> Arganbright, interview, January 24, 2015.

<sup>284</sup> Arganbright, interview, January 24, 2015.

Nelson as “No nonsense. Very serious. Extremely high standards and expectations. As a teacher, she was a very efficient person.”<sup>285</sup> Arganbright further states,

Her expectation and her demand in terms of ensemble, being exactly together and synchronized, were incredibly high. I felt we were pretty darn together. No. We were nowhere, anywhere near where we should aspire to and where we were expected to be. We caught on to that quickly, right away. Anything less than perfect was pretty intolerable [from Nelson]. And that is exactly what we went for. She had an extremely high standard for that.<sup>286</sup>

While Nelson filled the role of teacher and coach to this new piano duet team, Neal was “excellent about talking about building a business career... [and] was a stickler for stage deportment.”<sup>287</sup> Neal taught them that the “performance begins the moment you drive into the town until you drive away.”<sup>288</sup> Nelson’s coaching was focused more on performing the music itself. “They taught us that primo should be the one to pedal.”<sup>289</sup> Weekley and Arganbright learned the effectiveness of primo pedaling and that it is the “musically sensible thing to do in pedaling with four hands. But that came from Allison.”<sup>290</sup>

Nelson and Neal influenced Weekley’s and Arganbright’s decision to become a piano duet (one piano, four hands) team. “She [Nelson] said there are a lot of two-piano teams; why don’t you be unique and be a four-hand team?”<sup>291</sup> Weekley and Arganbright

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<sup>285</sup> Arganbright, interview, January 24, 2015.

<sup>286</sup> Arganbright, interview, January 24, 2015.

<sup>287</sup> Dr. Dallas Weekley, telephone interview, tape recording, January 24, 2015.

<sup>288</sup> Weekley, interview, January 24, 2105.

<sup>289</sup> Weekley, interview, January 24, 2105.

<sup>290</sup> Arganbright, interview, January 24, 2015.

<sup>291</sup> Weekley, interview, January 24, 2105.

wondered if there was enough music to build a career on four-hand music alone. Nelson and Neal assured them that there was plenty of high quality, four-hand music.

Arganbright recalls,

She introduced us to some very, very beautiful repertoire that we were not very much aware of because we were brand new, green. We didn't even get the idea to go into this until studying with them. Particularly they introduced us to the French Impressionists. From Romantic composers, Bizet, onto Faure and Debussy. Those composers, they introduced to us, from their four-hand work.<sup>292</sup>

Beginning later in 1959, Weekley and Arganbright performed as a piano duet team, playing pieces for one piano, four hands, and found a wealth of music originally written for four hands. The couple proceeded to have a successful piano duet career that spanned forty years. Nelson's experience in teaching and coaching Weekley and Arganbright in the summer of 1959 is one example of the lasting influence Nelson had on those she taught, and further demonstrates Nelson's expertise in the area of piano ensemble teaching before she joined the music faculty as artist-in-residence at UTM.

During Nelson's years on tour with Nelson and Neal, Nelson also did the bulk of research and writing on the *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series*, a series of teaching volumes for developing pianists. This teaching series is discussed more fully in chapter 5 but it should be noted here that Nelson's work on this series likely impacted her development as a teacher.

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<sup>292</sup> Arganbright, interview, January 24, 2015.

## **Contributions to UTM Music Department**

Nelson and Neal lived in Paris, Tennessee, about thirty miles from Martin, Tennessee where UTM is located. Over the years, Nelson and Neal had maintained contact with the university:

We [Nelson and Neal] were friendly with the music department and chairman of the music department. We had had a working relationship with UTM and a contract with them for the next two or three years as visiting faculty. So when Harry died I filled out the rest of the time doing that, which was a part time faculty job at UTM. For two years it was a part time job.<sup>293</sup>

This part-time working relationship led to the next step in Nelson's teaching career.

Harriet Fulton, then chair of the UTM music department, invited Nelson to teach full time. Nelson states,

Harriett Fulton was chairman of the music department and was really the backbone of its developing into what it is today. She was wonderful. She was a singer herself. And at one time she was "the" music faculty at UTM. She was it. She hired as the piano instructor a wonderful gentleman called Bob Stewart, Robert Stewart. So Harriett and Bob, after I'd gotten through with my part-time job, came to see me and asked me if I would consider becoming full-time faculty at UTM, which I had to do because I had children to raise.<sup>294</sup>

The offer of a full-time teaching position was very important to Nelson:

I mean for them just to come and tell me, and ask me to join [UTM] without my having to apply for it, without even knowing the job was available, was really quite remarkable. It was an extraordinary thing to have happen to me. It saved my life. I don't know what I would have done otherwise. Try to teach privately? I don't know. Haven't a clue.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>294</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>295</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

From 1971 to 1986 Nelson held the position of associate professor of music and artist-in-residence at UTM. In 1986 she became professor of music and retired in 1989. Nelson remained active as a performer at UTM and in other venues until the early 2000s. In the academic year 2001-2002 Nelson returned on short notice to UTM as full time piano faculty to fill an unexpected vacancy. In 1972 Nelson was named a distinguished service professor at UTM and continued with this designation through her retirement. In 1976 Nelson was named the Tennessee Music Teacher of the Year. In retirement Nelson holds the title of professor emerita at UTM.

#### *CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT*

When Nelson joined the faculty at UTM in 1971, the music degree programs were somewhat limited and there was no bachelor of music in piano performance degree available to students. Noting that UTM is in a rural environment, Nelson explains that she was joining a department that had no string program and “lots of band instruments because of the high school bands everywhere.”<sup>296</sup> The year Nelson started at UTM full time, the music faculty consisted of the chair of the department, Harriet Fulton (a singer), and one other pianist, Bob Stewart. Harriet Fulton was determined to expand the music degree programs to include piano performance and she asked Nelson to help develop the curriculum for the degree as well as to represent the department and the program as its artist-in-residence. Curriculum development and establishment of this program for pianists was one of Nelson’s first challenges. Nelson relates,

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<sup>296</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

They wanted to develop a program. Now this is when my pedagogy came in, and my involvement in teaching. But they worked with me and wanted me to help them set up a schedule of classes, what should be taught, what I thought the students needed to do in order to become piano majors so they could graduate from college as piano majors.<sup>297</sup>

The school did have a bachelor of music in education degree program, but it became Nelson's primary responsibility to develop the program for a bachelor of music in piano performance for which she would be the principal faculty teacher. "So we [Nelson, Fulton and Stewart] sat down together. We worked out ... how many courses had to be taken, how many hours that the university required in order to graduate, and what the degree would be called."<sup>298</sup> While Nelson was the responsible faculty member for this new degree program, she is quick to recognize the incredible contribution to the music department at UTM of her colleague, Harriett Fulton:

We have to think about what Harriett Fulton had done which was quite amazing. In 1971 she was responsible for building the music building, the fine arts building at UT Martin, and when that building went up, she acquired for the department, nine or ten seven foot grand pianos. Quite remarkable.<sup>299</sup>

In developing the curriculum for the bachelor of music in piano performance, Nelson was involved in all aspects including, "...the numbers of courses, how many hours [students] would take and this included piano ensemble and piano ensemble

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<sup>297</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>298</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>299</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

class.”<sup>300</sup> Nelson was initially hired to “be a pianist, to teach piano,”<sup>301</sup> but she was able to contribute in other ways as well.

### *TEACHING RESPONSIBILITIES*

Nelson’s role and contributions as a teacher at UTM grew naturally out of the curriculum development and her duties as artist-in-residence. Her responsibilities included teaching applied piano to music majors, teaching piano literature and establishing the UTM Piano Ensemble. In addition, the music department also needed a UTM faculty member to run and supervise student recitals which were scheduled every Tuesday afternoon:

Every student was required to play a recital probably twice during a quarter. At that time we had quarters not semesters. We had three quarters a year. And the students were all required to play a recital. And how did you know they were there? And ... they were required to attend so many recitals a year. But how did you keep track of that? Because I stood at the door and took attendance as the students came in.<sup>302</sup>

Nelson was also assigned to teach a class on keyboard literature which she had never taught before. Keyboard Literature at UTM was a two-year course with eight classes for each quarter. This became an interesting challenge for Nelson. She incorporated all aspects of music including the lives of composers and music history lessons to provide comprehensive piano literature classes to her students:

...what I did was not only talk about the music of each composer, about their lives, if I had recordings of any of their music I would bring it in. If there were concerts in the area that were using this music I would try to get my students to

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<sup>300</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>301</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>302</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.



go to the symphonies or recitals or whatever, so they would hear this music in person. And I would bring in books, I would bring in recordings, I had a record player in my studio and would play them recordings and use anything to make them acquainted with what music was like for these different composers during these particular times. I thought it was kind of a nifty job that I did on that.<sup>303</sup>

Nelson spent two years of serious work developing the material for this class and “there were some days when it ran for an hour and a half and some days where it just went for thirty-five minutes. But it was hard work.”<sup>304</sup>

It was this kind of effort and dedication which no doubt led to Nelson being named and honored as a distinguished service professor at University of Tennessee in 1972 and continuing until her retirement in 1989.

#### *ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE*

Nelson’s full time position as artist-in-residence at UTM, 1971-1989, included performing obligations in addition to her classroom teaching and speaking engagements both at UTM and other universities. Nelson had thrived as a collaborative artist before teaching at UTM and quickly sought out opportunities to perform in ensembles after joining UTM full time. She founded and performed in the University Trio at UTM that was initially comprised of Nelson, flutist Robert Fleming and clarinetist Gilbert Carp (all UTM faculty). The trio had an active performance regimen both on and off campus over most of Nelson’s time at UTM and continued from 1971 to 1988. After a hiatus, the trio was revived in 2004 by Dr. Elaine Harriss, a collaborative artist with whom

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<sup>303</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>304</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

Nelson performed both as a piano duo partner and in the trio (Harriss is also a flutist). The trio's most notable performance with Nelson performing was at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C. in 1976 on Tennessee's State Day Program as part of the country's bicentennial celebrations.<sup>305</sup>

In addition to performing in solo concerts, Nelson collaborated with the voice faculty and performed large programs as part of the University Trio and with visiting artists. Anytime a visiting chamber musician or chamber group like the Blair Quartet performed at UTM, Nelson collaborated and performed with them. Nelson collaborated with Bob Stewart on two-piano repertoire, performing Bartók's *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion*. Nelson recalls that "we [UTM] had a good percussion department."<sup>306</sup> With the trio Nelson recalls that, "we played lots of stuff, a lot of it was arrangements and some really good original works for the trio, but we played a lot of programs."<sup>307</sup> Elaine Harriss recalls that when she was part of the trio with Nelson they played in Bowling Green, Kentucky, Nashville, Tennessee, Memphis, Tennessee and at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee, among other venues.<sup>308</sup>

Early in her UTM years, Nelson and her colleagues developed informal exchange musical programs with faculty at other universities including the campuses in

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<sup>305</sup> "The University Trio at UTM," UTMartin.edu, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://www.utm.edu/staff/elaine/University%20Trio%20at%20UTM.htm>.

<sup>306</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>307</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>308</sup> Harriss, interview, January 24, 2015.

the University of Tennessee system.<sup>309</sup> It was up to performance faculty like Nelson to manage the process. Nelson arranged the performances between UTM and other universities in Tennessee to collaborate with other performing faculty. Performing in different venues in Tennessee gave the university (UTM) a chance to advertise and promote its music department, representing another way in which Nelson's performance activities benefitted and contributed to UTM.

### *THE UTM PIANO ENSEMBLE*

Nelson was asked in her first curriculum meetings at UTM with Harriet Fulton and Bob Stewart to set up a piano ensemble curriculum. Nelson states,

...in my meeting with Harriet and Bob Stewart one thing they wanted me to do was to have a piano ensemble class. So that really started it as a permanent class in the piano department. And it was required for the bachelor of music majors, piano ensemble was required ... maybe at the time for all four years.<sup>310</sup>

Nelson created and taught the class and encouraged collaborative participation on the piano with non-majors as well. Under Nelson's direction, the class was required for music education majors and piano majors, but she encouraged other students with piano background to participate as well.<sup>311</sup> The UTM Piano Ensemble today still holds rehearsals twice a week, just as it did under Nelson's direction, and the "ensemble performs a full program once per semester" playing a wide variety of literature

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<sup>309</sup> The University of Tennessee system is a public university system in Tennessee that includes three primary campuses in Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Martin (UTM), and a health sciences campus in Memphis. "University of Tennessee," Tennessee.edu, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://www.tennessee.edu>.

<sup>310</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>311</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

including “music for one piano four-hands, two pianos four-hands, two pianos eight-hands, etc., up to five pianos.”<sup>312</sup>

The UTM Piano Ensemble is a vital part of the UTM piano curriculum to this day and Nelson’s establishment of the class and program remains a matter of pride at the school. Through Nelson’s teaching, piano ensemble students learned the importance of listening, of “creating a larger sound,” memorizing works effectively, communicating with ensemble partners in subtle but important ways and understanding the duet and four-hands literature in profound ways.<sup>313</sup> On the issue of communicating with one’s ensemble partner, the Nelson and Neal years deepened Nelson’s understanding which she explains as follows:

...when you’re looking at your partner, their body language is going to tell you when they’re going to play. It’s going to tell you what they’re going to play. And if you’re used to playing with them, you will recognize that a raised eyebrow means that they’re about to start something, or they’re shrugging their shoulders when they’re going to end something. There are all kinds of little body cues that happen when people are playing if you are used to them. But you have to have memorized your part and look at your partner while this is happening.<sup>314</sup>

Nelson describes one of the keys to performing piano ensemble repertoire in the following way:

Your fingers are playing your own part, but what are you listening to? You’re listening to your partner. And this is, to me, this is why to some degree memorizing your music in ensemble playing, at least in two piano ensemble

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<sup>312</sup> “Keyboard,” University of Tennessee UT Martin, Academics, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://www.utm.edu/departments/music/keyboard.php>.

<sup>313</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>314</sup> Nelson, interview, January 10, 2015.

playing, is important because you can watch your partner all the time while you're playing.<sup>315</sup>

On the issue of memorizing piano ensemble repertoire while performing, Nelson believes that “to play with a partner from memory is by far the most desirable thing.”<sup>316</sup>

She believes that the core of collaborating with another pianist in piano ensemble playing is rooted in developing the skill of listening. In ensemble playing, she believes that performers “will listen more closely to their own playing if they become used to listening to other people playing and accompanying another person.”<sup>317</sup> What Nelson shared with her piano ensemble students at UTM was a need to “listen more acutely” as this had been a key to Nelson’s success throughout her career.<sup>318</sup>

Nelson made a strong impression on the piano ensemble students at UTM. One of her students, Kathleen Hurt O’Hare, reflects on her experience as part of the UTM Piano Ensemble as follows: “It was a highlight of my study at UTM. I found joy in performing with other in students, which awakened a permanent love for chamber music in all its forms.”<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Nelson, interview, January 10, 2015.

<sup>316</sup> Nelson, interview, January 10, 2015.

<sup>317</sup> Nelson, interview, January 10, 2015.

<sup>318</sup> Nelson, interview, January 10, 2015.

<sup>319</sup> Kathleen Hurt O’Hare, response in student questionnaire, 2015.

## *RETIREMENT YEARS FOLLOWING UTM*

Nelson's continued willingness to contribute to the music department at UTM after her retirement is perhaps best exemplified by Nelson's return to UTM on very short notice in 2001, for one academic year, and the impact that Lambert saw in that short time when he was department chair. In 2001, Lambert reports that the piano teacher at UTM left very late in the summer, "Way too late for us to do any sort of search. As the department chair, you know who I thought of first off? Allison. And I called her up and she said 'sure.'"<sup>320</sup>

Nelson returned to teach at UTM that year (2001-2002) and took responsibility for the piano students while UTM did a national search for a new piano teacher. One student in particular that Lambert remembers was an "older than average student, a woman in her mid-thirties" who had come back to school and studied with the prior teacher to finish up her degree.<sup>321</sup>

This young woman was a dedicated musician and very intent on doing well and had worked very hard with the previous piano teacher. But lo and behold Allison had her doing scales. Now even I know that the heart and soul of a pianist's technique is scales. Scales, scales, more scales.

...This particular student understood that this was very strong pedagogy, and in that year I guarantee you that ... they made more progress that year [than before]. This one particular student was hugely influenced and honored to work with Allison.

...And she upped her game to meet Allison's standards. And she ended up being a pretty... fine pianist herself. I ended up hiring her as the staff accompanist. One of the reasons I felt confident in doing that is she had a standard set for her that she stepped up to, and that was the one set by Allison.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Lambert, interview, January 24, 2015.

<sup>321</sup> Lambert, interview, January 24, 2015.

<sup>322</sup> Lambert, interview, January 24, 2015.

Lambert previously knew Nelson as a collaborative artist since they had concertized together in the 1990s. Lambert, however, had never been exposed to Nelson as a teacher since he joined the UTM faculty in 1990 after Nelson had retired in 1989. Later as the department chair, during that one academic year 2001-2002 when Nelson returned to teach, Lambert reports that, “I did notice in that interim year; those kids got taught and they did very well.”<sup>323</sup>

Given Nelson’s stature as a performer, it must be recognized that her willingness to teach in the University of Tennessee system at UTM was clearly a boon for a regional university and campus like UTM. As a result, there are intangible ways in which Nelson’s stature contributed to UTM even after her official retirement. Dr. Lambert explains,

There’s no question that the music program at the University of Tennessee at Martin made no bones about the fact that they had Allison Nelson on faculty. You know [UTM] is what we call a “regional comprehensive” school... somewhere between five and twelve thousand [student enrollment]. And ... many of them have music programs that are very good ... but on the other hand there’s not too many of them that have musicians on the faculty who had enjoyed an international performance career.<sup>324</sup>

Lambert also notes that it was “freely acknowledged that in Allison we had someone who had literally an international career and was working at that level;” and further that, even though Nelson never took advantage of this status in any way, they all understood the significance of her work, explaining that, “You better believe around campus there were people who knew who Allison Nelson was from the top down.”<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Lambert, interview, January 24, 2015.

<sup>324</sup> Lambert, interview, January 24, 2015.

<sup>325</sup> Lambert, interview, January 24, 2015.

### **Nelson's Piano Teaching**

Nelson's teaching at UTM was fulfilled primarily through teaching applied piano lessons. The research accumulated for this study includes interviews on Nelson's teaching qualities with selected colleagues. These interviews were conducted with Nelson's permission and were based on letters and interview guides that were provided in advance to the parties who were interviewed. Copies of the forms of cover letters and interview guides used may be found in Appendices D through G. In addition, comments from former colleagues were solicited by way of mailed questionnaires and the cover letters and questionnaires used for this solicitation are found in Appendix H.

Questionnaires were mailed to twenty-six former students of Nelson to assess the following: 1) their views of Nelson and her attributes as a teacher; 2) the impact Nelson had on them; and 3) their musical philosophies and concepts taught by Nelson. A copy of the cover letter and the questionnaire sent to students may be found in Appendix I. A total of eight questionnaires were returned to the author and selections from the responses in these questionnaires are used here. The low student response rate, approximately thirty percent, could be attributed to the advanced age of most of Nelson's students at the time of the request. The responses from former students include piano graduates from UTM, students who studied with her privately before and during her years at UTM who did not graduate from UTM, and one student who studied with Nelson in the UTM summer program but who also took private lessons with Nelson. The former students of Nelson who provided information for this study were asked to state their views on Nelson's teaching from both specific and general perspectives.



The primary aspects of Nelson's teaching are reported from responses to student questionnaires and to interviews with Nelson's colleagues. They relate to her teaching of both solo piano literature and piano ensemble literature, and include, in no particular order: 1) phrasing and the long phrase in the music; 2) authenticity and a responsibility to the score; 3) balance and creating beautiful sound; 4) interpretation, particularly with dynamic markings; 5) the necessity of listening; 6) practicing effectively; and 7) choosing repertoire. This section will begin first by reporting personal characteristics of Nelson's teaching that students and colleagues stated in questionnaires and interviews. Then seven main areas of musical focus will be discussed in detail. This section ends with an evaluation of Nelson's teaching legacy.

#### *PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS*

Former students were asked to describe Nelson with the first words that came to mind. Their candid responses provide a general summary of Nelson's teaching qualities as seen by her former students:

- Inspirational, wise, caring, strong, strict.
- artist.
- Disciplined, intelligent, musical, exacting, affectionate, focused, professional, great integrity, rigorous.
- A vigorous teacher, absolutely solid performer, highly principled in obeisance to the musical score.
- Strong, physically, emotionally, mentally and artistically.
- Musicality and unrelenting dedication to the task at hand.
- Perfectionist, caring, musical.
- Dedicated musician and teacher, extraordinary amount of experience, serious and thoughtful performer.

In addition to these observations, it is fair to say that her former students see Nelson as a teacher who cared about their development as musicians and about them individually. Nelson helped to facilitate the careers and lives of her students by bestowing discipline, wisdom, respect for the music and inspiration. One student noted Nelson's "intense affability in teaching style."<sup>326</sup> According to her student Kathleen Hurt O'Hare, "I learned a rigorous approach to piano playing from Dr. Nelson – an absolute respect for and fidelity to the score, habits of long and careful practice, and a sense of responsibility for any commitment made."<sup>327</sup> Student Rae Shannon recalls, "She made me aware of so many details I never even thought of before. She taught me what it is truly like to practice, to work hard and to try to improve each time you sit down to work."<sup>328</sup> Her dedication to her teaching at UTM has left a legacy at the university and in the lives of her students.

Nelson's students also report personal qualities that set her apart from other teachers. Her students felt that she really cared about them, more than just helping them to play the piano to the best of their ability, and that she cared about the whole person. For example, Nelson would recommend books in the library to her students and she would also give brief history lessons about the composers and the periods and places in which they lived:

In order to expand intellectual horizons, each lesson was also assigned several books to read – biographies, history, etc. I was instructed to keep a notebook in which to write a synopsis, an essay if you will, for each book. These

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<sup>326</sup> John Randal Hawkins, response in student questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>327</sup> Hurt O'Hare, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>328</sup> Rae Shannon, response in student questionnaire, 2015.

“scribblings” were then reviewed at subsequent lessons accompanied by constructive criticism as to both content and use of language.<sup>329</sup>

Nelson was highly principled in regard to score fidelity but her rigorous standards were conveyed in a congenial way. Duane Campbell, former student, recounts these aspects of Nelson’s teaching in the following way: “Adherence to detailed score reading, emphasis on singing tone and relating piano study to the larger world of music.”<sup>330</sup> One former student who wishes to remain anonymous remembers that Nelson “took her role seriously, but with moments of good humor” and that despite her strong opinions, Nelson “did not attempt to suppress those who differed artistically. She inspired independent thinking.”<sup>331</sup>

It was not unusual for Nelson to treat some students with a watchful eye more suited to a parent. Uga Grants, former student of Nelson, remembers Nelson’s teaching habits that extended beyond piano instruction when he studied with her in the 1960s, before her full-time position at UTM: “Being an uncouth youth in his teens, I was also instructed to read Emily Post’s etiquette book and then put the guidelines into everyday practice under the watchful eye of Nelson and Neal”.<sup>332</sup>

One professional colleague who elected to remain anonymous for this study describes Nelson as a “person with very high standards” and an “excellent scholar and

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<sup>329</sup> Uga Grants, response in student questionnaire, 2015. Grants also studied with Nelson at UTM after she joined the UTM faculty full time in 1971.

<sup>330</sup> Duane Campbell, response in student questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>331</sup> Anonymous, response in student questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>332</sup> Grants, response in student questionnaire, 2015.

pedagogue.”<sup>333</sup> This same colleague also observes that Nelson is “a serious no nonsense kind of person” and “someone very passionate about music.”<sup>334</sup> Nancy Arganbright, the duettist in the team of Weekley and Arganbright, was coached professionally by Nelson and Harry Neal in 1959 and recalls that Nelson “was very efficient, very thorough. She [Nelson] carries a certain amount of reserve and dignity about her.”<sup>335</sup> In addition to these qualities, Arganbright appreciated the fact that in her teaching Nelson was “organized” and “very secure in what she wanted us to learn.”<sup>336</sup> Nelson’s colleague, Kevin Lambert, notes her good nature and adds that Nelson has a “keen sense of humor.”<sup>337</sup>

Although she was highly demanding, Nelson communicated with her students in ways that nurtured them and that modeled Nelson’s own love and respect for music. Former student Rae Shannon recalls that “Dr. Nelson was the first musician and teacher I met who was so dedicated and serious about music, which forced me to become more dedicated and serious. In so doing, my love of music greatly increased.”<sup>338</sup> Kathleen Hurt O’Hare was a close friend of Nelson’s daughter, Elise, and Hurt O’Hare recalls fondly that she “spent time at their house. I felt she treated me as a daughter.”<sup>339</sup> Uga

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<sup>333</sup> Anonymous colleague, response in colleague questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>334</sup> Anonymous colleague, response in colleague questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>335</sup> Arganbright, interview, January 24, 2015.

<sup>336</sup> Arganbright, interview, January 24, 2015.

<sup>337</sup> Lambert, interview, January 24, 2015.

<sup>338</sup> Shannon, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>339</sup> Hurt O’Hare, questionnaire, 2015.

Grants sees Nelson's wisdom as a teacher in her "patience with respect to dealing with the foibles of a student in his formative years. That requires a profound understanding of the human condition."<sup>340</sup> Nelson's personal characteristics and teaching style made a strong impression on her piano students and their comments generally show Nelson to be a good-natured person that cared about her students and found ways to bring out the best they had to offer their music.

### *PHRASING*

Nelson maintains that "the most important thing that Serkin had in his playing, that he passed on to his students was the long line, the long phrase line."<sup>341</sup> When interviewed, Nelson gave an example of this issue in discussing Brahms *Intermezzo*, Op. 118, No. 2 in A major. "I have heard that [Brahms *Intermezzo* Op. 118, No. 2 in A major] played, all the notes, but so badly with no understanding of what the music has to say."<sup>342</sup> She explains that students do not see, for example, that the first phrase is more than four measures long and that they need to treat it like it is a "whole phrase in a sentence."<sup>343</sup> As a teacher, Nelson is interested in helping her students create this long line, not chopped up little phrases:

There is always a high point in every phrase and in every movement. In every piece there is a high point, and one has to build up toward it, not chop it up in

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<sup>340</sup> Grants, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>341</sup> Nelson, "Remembering Serkin."

<sup>342</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>343</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

little pieces and junk them all together. ... [T]hat may be the most important thing about making music.<sup>344</sup>

With respect to discussing phrasing, Nelson attempted to help her students see more than notes and phrases. She taught them to understand the music and also how to produce the right sounds and musical phrases. Hurt O'Hare remembers that Nelson taught her to "find the natural shape of the line," and that Nelson exhibited an "absolute understanding of the whole of music—pieces as living entities."<sup>345</sup> One student had an issue with phrasing in a Chopin nocturne and Nelson focused on how to make the melody sing and find the natural shape of the line. Former student Uga Grants remembers this advice, "Properly gauging the silence between phrases and even individual notes is of equal importance to the sounds themselves."<sup>346</sup> According to Rae Shannon,

Dr. Nelson was the first person to emphasize playing as if you were playing for that person way, way up there in the balcony. She made me aware of bringing out the melody even when it is an inner voice. She was the first person to really show me how to phrase and breathe in the music.<sup>347</sup>

Another student similarly recalls, "Breathing in musical phrases seemed very organic to her; I had to be taught how and where to breathe. She was enormously patient and kind."<sup>348</sup> John Randal Hawkins, former student, remembers Nelson emphasizing the

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<sup>344</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>345</sup> Hurt O'Hare, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>346</sup> Grants, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>347</sup> Shannon, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>348</sup> Anonymous student questionnaire response, 2015.

“importance of singing tone even in passages that were not overtly lyrical!”<sup>349</sup> The same student reports that, “Attention to dynamic levels was also a prime consideration.”<sup>350</sup>

#### *AUTHENTICITY OF THE SCORE*

Nelson’s insistence on authenticity and fidelity to the score was directly influenced through her study with Serkin. Nelson stated that, “My early education in respecting the score was in line with one of Serkin’s passions. My reaction to it today is severe. I get almost nauseated if I see a lot of markings [by students] in the music.”<sup>351</sup> Another aspect of authenticity is Nelson’s insistence that good technique be used simply to produce great music instead of using it for the sake of showmanship. Nelson prefers to find the drama in the music itself, not in the performer. “So let’s think about the music and the drama of the music, not about how elegant you look to the audience.”<sup>352</sup>

Nelson’s belief in authenticity also is revealed in former student comments that Nelson stressed playing only what the composer had written on the page. Nelson was always on the lookout for the most original edition of a work so that the student could adhere to what the composer intended without added commentary not provided by the composer. In respecting the musical score, Nelson did allow students to write critical fingering into their music due to the importance of correct fingering for creating a

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<sup>349</sup> Hawkins, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>350</sup> Hawkins, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>351</sup> Nelson, “Remembering Serkin.”

<sup>352</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

beautiful sound. Shannon reports, “she wanted you to take very good care of your written score.”<sup>353</sup>

### *BALANCE*

Nelson’s view of balance for pianists arises from her belief that a performer must be able to bring out the melody and create beautiful sound. She defines balance as “the logical distribution of strength between several notes played at the same time,” and explains her ideas further as follows:

Which is the important note that you want the listener to be aware of? To be conscious of? ... [I]t is the melody. The most important note to be heard at any time is the melody. And the melody is to be accompanied by the note at the bottom, the base note. Those are the two most important notes in good balance. And the notes in between should be much quieter so they do not interfere with the melody and the base note.<sup>354</sup>

Another important aspect of creating beautiful sound, in Nelson’s view, centers on the importance of fingering, especially legato fingering:

I’m very fussy about fingering. I must have been raised on good fingering. But what is so ignored is legato fingering. ... Not only to use fingering where you can connect the notes with your fingers, but to change your fingers on a key so that you can then move to the next notes legato, holding the keys down. ... But legato is what produces, helps produce a beautiful sound. It’s difficult to produce a really beautiful melodic line if you don’t have legato fingering.<sup>355</sup>

A former student of Nelson’s discusses his experience in learning to balance the melody over the accompaniment in a Chopin nocturne as follows:

My first piece I performed at UTM was an early Chopin nocturne. We worked so hard at my lessons to make the melody sing. I’d never thought about that

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<sup>353</sup> Shannon, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>354</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>355</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.



much before. I think we spent a month on this one piece—it was one I could almost sight-read but I needed to learn how not just to “play it” but to make it a piece of music.<sup>356</sup>

#### *INTERPRETATION*

One aspect of performance that is important to both solo pianists and ensemble players is the proper interpretation of dynamic markings used by composers. Nelson believes that with dynamic markings, composers “put down the final dynamic result, but not what the individual notes should sound like at that particular time.”<sup>357</sup> She feels that this is especially important in an ensemble, explaining that

... good ensemble music should have a lot of variety, understanding where the melody is between the four hands and what the accompaniment should be. If the melody is forte, the accompaniment part should be piano. But the end result will be forte.<sup>358</sup>

Former student Duane Campbell remembers that Nelson “always stressed trying to play what the composer had written on the page” and “... didn’t like overt, extra sentimentality and she wanted to avoid changing tempos where the composer did not call for it. She always was on the lookout for the edition of a piece that was the most ‘by the composer’ (without added interpretation by others).”<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Duane Campbell, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>357</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>358</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>359</sup> Duane Campbell, questionnaire, 2015.

## *LISTENING*

In teaching piano ensemble, Nelson consistently stressed listening as a critical element to creating good music. “In piano ensemble you have to listen.... And that’s the most important element of playing piano ensemble.”<sup>360</sup> Nelson believes that for duo performers, for example, the important element is “what comes out of the two players together. You cannot any longer just listen to yourself and you cannot just listen only to the other player. You have to listen to the complete result of both players and the music that they can make together.”<sup>361</sup>

Nelson’s insistence that students learn to listen was also assimilated by students. Former student Rae Shannon, who studied with Nelson but did not participate in the piano ensemble at UTM, recalls Nelson’s focus on listening as follows: “In playing you need to be two persons at once. One person playing on the bench and another one listening many feet away.”<sup>362</sup> Students who participated in the UTM Piano Ensemble or the summer program directed by Nelson, commented on more than just listening as a concept taught by Nelson, but also on the benefits of ensemble instruction. One former student explains that “by demonstrating the particular ‘nuts and bolts’ of the genre [piano ensemble], she was able to model a broad horizon of teaching skills which potential teachers could draw from.”<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>361</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>362</sup> Shannon, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>363</sup> Hawkins, questionnaire, 2015.

## *EFFECTIVE PRACTICE*

In addition to these philosophies, Nelson stressed the important of effective practice with her students. And while this theme may be universal with piano teachers, Nelson maintained a high standard with her students when it came to the quantity and quality of practice. The comments, both general and specific, of Nelson's former students reflect that they assimilated and remember Nelson's teaching ideas and philosophies. Their comments and responses also demonstrate in some cases the strong impact that studying piano ensemble had on them as well as their appreciation for the opportunity to study with Nelson.

Harriss believes that one of Nelson's teaching traits that was key for the success of Nelson's piano students was "just the insistence that you will practice, you will do this, never accepting half effort."<sup>364</sup> Harriss also sees in Nelson's attitude that there is a sense that she continually wants to improve and that for Nelson "there is always something new to learn."<sup>365</sup> In addition, Nelson's philosophy on practicing technique, specifically scales and arpeggios, is that it should be done each day because, as one student states, "they are building blocks and tools that you keep [so] when you find yourself learning a new composition you already have those tools on hand for your scale and arpeggio passages."<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> Harriss, interview, January 24, 2015.

<sup>365</sup> Harriss, interview, January 24, 2015.

<sup>366</sup> Shannon, questionnaire, 2015.

Nelson expected her students to practice a great deal and at times found unusual ways to communicate the seriousness of her commitment to them as well. Former student Rae Shannon recalls her experience learning Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No. 3*:

That first summer I was not working and practicing as hard as she wanted me to and she was about to send me packing back to Mississippi. She decided to really challenge me and handed me Prokofieff's *Piano Concerto No. 3* and said "come back immediately when you have the first movement memorized no matter what time day or night." I believe she thought she would not see me for weeks, but I showed up the next afternoon and knocked on the door. The door opens and I was embarrassed that there was a room full of nuns visiting Dr. Nelson. I hated to interrupt but I was doing as I was told. There I was ready to play my first movement for her and she told me to sit right down and let's hear it then and there, nuns and all. From then on I was allowed to continue my studies with her and we both truly realized it was going to be hard work from then on.<sup>367</sup>

Another student notes, "She pushed me further than I would have ever pushed myself. She acknowledged my capabilities at a young age (sixteen) when I lacked confidence."<sup>368</sup> Students also saw Nelson's commitment in her focus during lessons: "Piano lessons were given without constraints of time, often ranging from two to four hours."<sup>369</sup>

Proper and effective practice was reported by many students as a key requirement to studying with Nelson. In fact, Nelson encouraged her students to treat practice like a job and to never waste valuable practice time. According to one student, Nelson would say, "In practicing think: this is not today; this is next year."<sup>370</sup> Students recall learning to practice, followed by more practice. Uga Grants recalls that Nelson

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<sup>367</sup> Shannon, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>368</sup> Anonymous student questionnaire response, 2015.

<sup>369</sup> Grants, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>370</sup> Shannon, questionnaire, 2015.

once quoted Rudolf Serkin having said stage fright is caused by one of two things: “lack of preparation or ego.”<sup>371</sup> A minimum requirement of four hours of practicing every day was reported by several students.

Summarizing several questionnaire responses from former students about proper practicing, it is clear that Nelson communicated effectively that it is what you think while you practice that counts. She encouraged her students to practice slowly and accurately. She emphasized always playing correctly, practicing at varying tempos and practicing very slowly, focusing on one element at a time. Her approach to practicing was through the intelligent application of attention to smaller chunks of music. Some students reported that Nelson emphasized listening intently while practicing to avoid playing on autopilot. This is an example of Nelson’s application of an ensemble philosophy to her solo performance teaching. According to Uga Grants, “Practice piecemeal, in small segments. At all costs avoid the tendency to simply start at the beginning and extend toward the end. This results in the beginning of a composition begin far better prepared than its conclusion.”<sup>372</sup> Hurt O’Hare notes that Nelson’s expectations for her lesson preparation were high which caused her to be “Thorough!” and, Hurt O’Hare adds, “I tried to memorize my weekly assignments, so was in the habit of always being ready to perform something.”<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Grants, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>372</sup> Grants, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>373</sup> Hurt O’Hare, questionnaire, 2015.

## CHOOSING REPERTOIRE

Nelson exhibited expertise in selecting appropriate music specific to the student's abilities and desires, although students did not always agree with her choices. One student recalls her experience in questioning Nelson's choice of repertoire for her when the student wanted to play Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasie*, D. 760. According to Hurt O'Hare,

Once I brought in the *Wanderer Fantasie*, having decided the Schubert impromptu she had assigned was too easy for me. When I announced I was going to play the *Wanderer Fantasie*, her look of incredulity stopped me. I have never forgotten the lecture that followed. It fostered in me a sense of humility that until that moment was sorely lacking.<sup>374</sup>

Elaine Harriss, who worked alongside Nelson for many years, notes Nelson's thorough knowledge of piano literature and "what it requires to play the repertoire. So ... she could tailor what the student worked on to what the student could do, and to what the student needed to go further in doing."<sup>375</sup>

## TEACHING LEGACY

In assessing the comments of Nelson's former students, it is clear that Nelson was able to effectively communicate her teaching philosophies and beliefs. Former students benefitted from and assimilated Nelson's musical ideas, including those on the long line and creating beautiful or singing melodies with proper phrasing, breathing, balance, fingering and other key concepts. Several students noted Nelson's principles

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<sup>374</sup> Hurt O'Hare, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>375</sup> Harriss, interview, January 24, 2015.

concerning interpretation and dynamics. Many mention their own respect for the musical score and authenticity. And while students were not uniform in their comments about these key musical ideas, they were unanimous in respecting and praising Nelson's teaching, the opportunities she created for them and her commitment to her students.

Nelson was also able to communicate to her students a sense of responsibility to the music they performed as well as the need to share their musical gifts and heritage. "[T]here was very much a sense of the performance being in the service of the music, not vice versa."<sup>376</sup> In considering Nelson's broader contributions as a teacher, former student Uga Grants recognizes that he is part of something larger to which he owes a sense of gratitude: "It's hard to quantify the accumulated wisdom as it gets passed from one generation of musicians to the next. Just grateful that one is part of that process."<sup>377</sup> Kathleen Hurt O'Hare notes that the "great Austro-German tradition of Rudolf Serkin that Dr. Nelson learned at Curtis – a selflessness in the service of great music, especially Beethoven and Schubert," is the legacy that she passed on to her students.<sup>378</sup> Another student acknowledges that without the musical background he received from the artistic teaching of Nelson, he might not have been accepted into the graduate program at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey.<sup>379</sup>

In sharing her abilities as a teacher, Nelson also maintains a sense of gratitude and an understanding of the importance of passing on important musical knowledge and

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<sup>376</sup> Hurt O'Hare, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>377</sup> Grants, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>378</sup> Hurt O'Hare, questionnaire, 2015.

<sup>379</sup> Anonymous, questionnaire, 2015.

lessons learned from her own studies with Rudolf Serkin: “Today, some of my former students tell me that in their lessons they hear themselves say things to their students that I said in their lessons with me. I like to think that they are Serkin’s words being passed on yet again to another generation.”<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> Nelson, “Remembering Serkin.”



## CHAPTER 5

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TEACHING LITERATURE THROUGH THE *NELSON AND NEAL PIANO STUDY SERIES*

#### Creation and Development of the *Piano Study Series*

The *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series*,<sup>381</sup> co-authored by Allison Nelson and Harry Neal (hereafter the *Piano Study Series*), was published beginning in 1965 with additional volumes and materials published between 1968 and 1973. Harry Neal and Allison Nelson began working on the material for these books in the early 1960s and the research and development process initially took over two years.<sup>382</sup> The creation of the *Piano Study Series* was influenced in part by the educational experiences of Nelson's children who did their schoolwork while traveling on the road with Nelson and Neal via a popular correspondence course—the Calvert School.<sup>383</sup> Speaking of her

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<sup>381</sup> Allison Nelson and Harry Neal, *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series* (Chicago, IL: Manorhouse Press, 1965).

<sup>382</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>383</sup> The Calvert School, based originally in Maryland, had a popular curriculum for early and middle school children in the 1950s and 60s and was used by, among others, military, missionary and diplomatic families overseas. Calvert shipped lesson manuals, textbooks,

children, Nelson recalls, “Oh they just absolutely loved it when their Calvert school books arrived.”<sup>384</sup> It was this experience with her own children and the Calvert school that motivated Nelson and her husband to consider publishing a piano learning series: “My children absolutely adored their education. So the *Nelson and Neal Study Series* was actually inspired by the Calvert School.”<sup>385</sup> In addition to this, Nelson was inspired to create these books by her early music education experiences with the Australian Music Examinations Board (AMEB).<sup>386</sup>

The ideas, content, repertoire selection, teaching materials and editorial notes were researched and developed primarily by Nelson who recalls that she did “the bulk of the work” including choosing the material and even writing the notes.<sup>387</sup> The organization of the material follows a pattern similar to the approach taken in the Calvert School materials used by her children, and Nelson describes the similarities as follows:

The way [the *Piano Study Series* books] were set up with the relationship between ... the piano and the theory books ... and the teacher’s manual which told you how to use those books from one week to the next; and then how to grade them; and at the end of the year [students] got their little certificate if they had done all the work.<sup>388</sup>

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workbooks, and school supplies to students in over fifty countries. In the 1940s it was used by the U.S. Department of Defense and was later officially approved by the U.S. State Department. Calvert Education, “About Calvert,” CalvertVirtualSchools.org, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://calvertvirtuelschools.org/about-calvert/history-and-philosophy>.

<sup>384</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>385</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>386</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>387</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>388</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

Repertoire selection, sequencing of the difficulty of repertoire, and notes to the teacher, student and parent reflect the attention to detail characteristic of Nelson. She worked on the *Piano Study Series* in the summer months while the couple were not touring and she also worked while they were on the road. For example, at her home in Paris, Tennessee, a separate building behind their home converted into an office where Nelson would work in the summers until “three o’clock in the mornings because it was quiet.”<sup>389</sup> In addition, she would frequently “spend days at a place like the Library of Congress having them bring music to me to look at. The music that is in the *Nelson and Neal Study Series* is all music that I selected, that I chose. And I had to look through a lot of material in order to come up with [it].”<sup>390</sup>

Nelson also used her time on the road to assemble all the material for the books, mostly working alone:

...while we were on tour, if we had extra days my husband and whoever our driver was at the time would put me in a hotel room with all of my material ... and they would go off and leave me alone and let me work. And I worked in hotel rooms on this project. Just whenever I had time to do that. And if I were by a music museum that had a library, or that had a good music department, I would go in there and look at their stuff that they had available. And ... if I had a week off, I’d go to study in Washington and stay at a hotel in Washington and spend my days at the music department of the Library of Congress.<sup>391</sup>

When Nelson and Neal decided to develop the *Piano Study Series*, it was natural for the couple to think first about self-publishing. As detailed in *Wave as You Pass* (1958), the couple experienced discovering their path for themselves. They started a

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<sup>389</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>390</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>391</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

conventional performance career in an unconventional way—setting up their own tours and engagements at the start. They purchased and refit by themselves their first truck to transport their pianos. They did most of the work remodeling the old home they purchased in Paris, Tennessee. They carefully interviewed professional managers before having one of them, and eventually several, manage their engagements. Virtually every personal and professional step they took started with a careful analysis of whether they needed help or could do it on their own. For the *Piano Study Series*, Harry Neal explored their “contacts with the publishers and editors” and the couple decided to form the Otto Kapell Company and to act on their own as publishers.<sup>392</sup>

After Harry Neal’s death in 1968, Nelson decided to sell the Otto Kapell business and the publishing rights to the *Piano Study Series* to GIA Publishing. Nelson explains that GIA still offers the books for sale, but that GIA has “never done any advertising at all for the Nelson and Neal [Series].”<sup>393</sup> As a result, the *Piano Study Series* has never been actively marketed by a publisher. Based on her conversations with teachers about the books, however, Nelson offers that the books will teach students “how to study intelligently,” and further explains, “Those who use it, love it because it’s so serious and has such a good selection of repertoire.”

The *Piano Study Series* includes a *Preparatory Book*, *Christmas Book*, *Grade 1*, *Grade 2*, *Grade 3*, *Grade 4*, *Grade 5*, *Theory Book 1* through *Theory Book 3*, a *Teacher’s Manual*, Student Certificates and Student Report Cards. Although the books follow a clear sequence of levels, they were in fact compiled and published slightly out

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<sup>392</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>393</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

of order due most likely to Nelson's personal experience of learning the basics of piano rapidly.<sup>394</sup> *Grade 1* was developed first, before the *Preparatory Book* in the *Piano Study Series*. According to Nelson, *Grade 1* repertoire was "at the beginning level," but after completing *Grade 1*, Neal and the couple's editorial consultants decided that they "needed something easier."<sup>395</sup> Nelson's reaction to this advice was, "What do you mean easier? Easier than that?"<sup>396</sup> But she accepted the advice and then wrote the *Preparatory Book* to reflect the need for a slower pacing of materials for the average student. In each grade, Nelson worked to assemble "a good selection of repertoire" and to create a "serious study of how to play as well and as beautifully as possible... regardless of the amount of talent [a student has]."<sup>397</sup>

According to the Nelson and Neal catalog, which provides information on their publications in this series, the *Teacher's Manual* covers *Grade 1* through *Grade 4* and includes lesson plans with teaching instructions for repertoire, technical work and ear training. The *Teacher's Manual* states that the *Piano Study Series* presents repertoire levels according to the standard observed in all English-speaking countries which have a national standard for musical grades.<sup>398</sup> The *Teacher's Manual* for the *Piano Study*

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<sup>394</sup> As noted in chapter 2, even during her elementary years Nelson was accustomed to practicing several hours a day and advanced through her AMEB study and testing levels faster and at a younger age than any previous student in Australia, completing these studies in 1938 at the age of eleven.

<sup>395</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>396</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>397</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>398</sup> Allison Nelson and Harry Neal, *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series: Teacher's Manual* (Chicago, IL: Manorhouse Press, 1967), 1.

*Series* was modeled on the *Teacher's Manual* associated with the Calvert school study materials. The organization and presentation of the *Piano Study Series* reflect the co-authors' values as musicians, the historical period in which the authors developed as pianists and the environment in which it was developed.

The rest of this chapter is an evaluation of the books that comprise the *Piano Study Series* (*Preparatory Book, Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3, Grade 4, Grade 5, Theory Book 1, Theory Book 2, Theory Book 3* and the *Christmas Book*). The evaluation of the *Piano Study Series* takes into account the detailed remarks, suggestions, directions and annotations included in each the books. All of the markings, as well as the repertoire selection, represent Nelson's pedagogical ideas concerning the sequence of learning and the necessary elements for the development of a student serious about studying piano, and reflect the comprehensive approach to learning music she experienced in her youth.

### ***Preparatory Book and Christmas Book***

The *Preparatory Book* and the *Christmas Book* in the *Piano Study Series* were created several years apart, but both books are intended for the beginning piano student and can be used simultaneously. The *Piano Study Series* is a piano learning series with a comprehensive approach to piano study from the beginning to advanced levels. Among the *Piano Study Series* materials, the *Preparatory Book* and *Christmas Book* are most similar to average-age method books, introducing one or two concepts at a time and sequencing material at a pace comparable to average-age beginning piano method books.

Piano method books for average-age beginning piano students are grouped into three different reading approaches: middle C, multi-key and intervallic. Some method books combine the most advantageous aspects of one or more of these three reading approaches, otherwise known as an eclectic method. The predominant reading approach used by most method books published in the 1930s was the middle C approach.<sup>399</sup> The *Piano Study Series*, published between 1965 and 1973, uses the middle C approach in the *Preparatory Book*. One of the main advantages to the middle C reading approach is that students learn small units of information at a time by introducing one or a few pitches in a piece. Some other method books that implement a classic middle C reading approach are *David Carr Glover Method for Piano*,<sup>400</sup> *John W. Schaum Piano Course* by John Schaum,<sup>401</sup> and *Modern Course for the Piano* by John Thompson.<sup>402</sup> The combination or eclectic approach to more modern piano method books of the middle C reading approach include *Piano Adventures* by Faber and Faber,<sup>403</sup> Alfred Music's

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<sup>399</sup> Marianne Uszler, Stewart Gordon, and Scott McBride Smith, *The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Belmont, CA: Schirmer Books, 2000), 4.

<sup>400</sup> David Carr Glover, *David Carr Glover Method for Piano* (Miami, FL: CPP/Belwin, 1988).

<sup>401</sup> John W. Schaum, *John W. Schaum Piano Course* (Miami, FL: Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp., 1945).

<sup>402</sup> John Thompson, *Modern Course for the Piano* (Florence, KY: The Willis Music Co., 1936).

<sup>403</sup> Randall Faber and Nancy Faber, *Piano Adventures* (North Miami Beach, FL: FJH Music, 1993).

*Premier Piano Course*,<sup>404</sup> and *Hal Leonard Student Piano Library*.<sup>405</sup> Although the *Preparatory Book* in the *Piano Study Series* uses the middle C approach to learning the basics, the *Preparatory Book* alone is dedicated to a basic reading approach, versus a multi-volume, slower-paced sequencing of the basics.

The *Preparatory Book* primarily includes original compositions written by Nelson for beginning study, with the exception of arrangements of folk songs and nursery rhymes, and is intended for children with no previous music instruction. The editors do not include lesson plans for the *Preparatory Book* in the *Teacher's Manual* (only lesson plans for *Grade 1* through *Grade 5* are provided). The editors do, however, include a message to the teacher in the preface:

The Nelson and Neal Preparatory Book has been designed especially for the very young beginner. Each lesson presents a new idea, and each idea is reinforced through repetition from one lesson to the next. No attempt has been made to teach sharps, flats or rests. Emphasis has been placed on acquiring a note-reading skill. At the same time, the student is introduced to uncomplicated note values and simple rhythms.

By the end of this book the student will be familiar with all the lines and spaces of both clefs as well as ledger lines. Whole, half and quarter notes are studied along with the dotted half. Both 4/4 and 3/4 times are used. Written work has been carefully planned to arouse the student's interest and direct his attention to the problem at hand. As the student's skill grows, familiar tunes are introduced, encouraging his interest and desire to learn still further.

Upon completion of the *Preparatory Book*, the student may continue with *Grade 1* of the Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series, or any other suitable material of the same level of difficulty.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> Dennis Alexander, Gayle Kowalchyk, E. L. Lancaster, Victoria McArthur, and Martha Mier, *Premier Piano Course* (Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2010).

<sup>405</sup> Barbara Kreader, Fred Kern, Phillip Kevern, and Mona Rejino, *Hal Leonard Student Piano Library* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Co., 1996).

<sup>406</sup> Allison Nelson and Harry Neal, *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series: Preparatory Book* (Chicago, IL: Manorhouse Press, 1968), 2.



Each original composition in the *Preparatory Book* introduces one new concept, using middle C position and C position and a few other hand positions on different starting notes for each piece. Although no workbook or theory book accompanies this *Preparatory Book*, activities for the young beginner are included throughout the *Preparatory Book*, such as page dedicated to a space for the tracing of both left and right hands of the average-age beginning student.

The first concept introduced is the grouping of the two and three black keys on the keyboard, followed by three different note values: the quarter note, half note and whole note. After the grand staff and line notes and space notes are introduced, the authors instruct the student to play all white keys from the bottom of the piano to the top of the piano, calling out note names aloud. The distinction between listening to the notes increase in pitch—as the student plays ascending notes, or plays to the right of, the keyboard—is made when the sounds decrease in pitch lower as the student plays down the keyboard. After all the white keys have been played as well as the black keys in groups of two and three, the student has played all eighty-eight keys on the piano. The editors then instruct the student to play all the C's on the piano.

As shown in figure 5.1, middle C is introduced as the first note on the grand staff for the right hand in whole notes only, followed by the same exercise in the left hand.

**Figure 5.1.** Introduction of middle C. Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Preparatory Book*, 12.



Notes are added one by one in each hand, using whole notes, half notes and quarter notes, until the students can read and play pitches from A below middle C to the E above middle C, one note played at a time.

After the concept of loud and soft sounds is introduced through a song entitled, “Echo Song,” quarter notes are to be played by both hands, still one note at a time, in the original composition entitled, “Little March.” As seen in figure 5.2, repeated notes are introduced for the first time in this piece.

**Figure 5.2.** “Little March.” Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Preparatory Book*, 21.



The two following pieces introduce 4/4 and 3/4 time signatures, respectively, in pieces using all note names and note values the student has learned thus far. The second of these two, “Skating,” introduces 3/4 time and is the first and only song in the book to introduce the dotted half note. The folk song, “Yankee Doodle,”<sup>407</sup> asks the student fill in the missing notes in the melody, reinforcing aural learning and is followed by the nursery rhyme, “Old MacDonald,”<sup>408</sup> where the student is asked to identify whether the song is in 4/4 or 3/4 time signature.

The next piece, “Catch Me” (see figure 5.3) is the first in C position, introducing the C in the bass clef an octave below middle C, and is the first piece in the book that requires the student to play hands together.

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<sup>407</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Preparatory Book*, 26.

<sup>408</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Preparatory Book*, 27.

**Figure 5.3.** “Catch Me.” Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Preparatory Book*, 28.

**Catch Me**

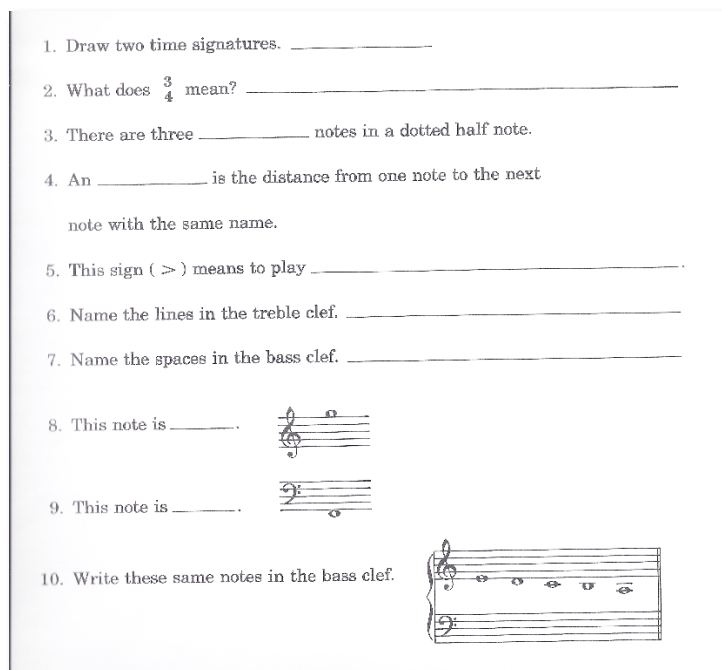
Write in the names of the new notes in measure two of the bass clef.  
For fun, begin the left and right hands together, sometimes.

Although full triads are not introduced in the *Preparatory Book*, open fifths in the left hand are introduced in the original composition, “Grey Eagle’s Dance.”<sup>409</sup> This piece is written in an A minor hand position and introduces the accent sign (>).

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<sup>409</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Preparatory Book*, 32.

**Figure 5.4.** “Test.” Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Preparatory Book*, 35.



A final “test” is presented after the real test on page 35 (see figure 5.4):

“Measure your hands against the drawing on page three. Have they grown since you began piano lessons?”<sup>410</sup> The *Preparatory Book* teaches all the basic concepts needed for the average-age beginning student. The *Christmas Book* is to be used in conjunction with the *Preparatory Book* and *Grade 1*:

The *Christmas Book* was published in 1973, a few years after the *Preparatory Book* and the other books in the *Piano Study Series*, and it presents material appropriate for the beginning student. All songs are arrangements of popular Christmas tunes, such as “Away in a Manger,” “Silent Night, Holy Night,” “Joy to the World,” and “Jingle Bells.”<sup>411</sup> The editors decorate each Christmas Carol in the *Christmas Book* with black and white sketches that capture the holiday spirit for every page. The editors include an Introduction stating how this book may be used with their other materials in this series:

<sup>410</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Preparatory Book*, 36.

<sup>411</sup> Allison Nelson and Harry Neal, *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series: Christmas Book* (Chicago, IL: Manorhouse Press, 1973), 3.

The Christmas Book may be used by the young beginner or by the adult whose keyboard experience has been limited. It is an extension of the Nelson and Neal Preparatory Book and overlaps Grade I Piano Book.

The authors believe that the student will learn to read more rapidly working on tunes he or she already knows by ear. The arrangements are simple but tasteful. There are no stretches wider than a sixth, and fingering is tailored to fit a small hand.

It is suggested that The Christmas Book be assigned for study as supplementary repertoire. However, these carols have been carefully selected for the pleasure of young and old alike.<sup>412</sup>

Of the fourteen Christmas carols, nine explain concepts that are used in their respective pieces. “Good King Wenceslas,”<sup>413</sup> for example, includes a definition of key signatures for the student, while “We Wish You a Merry Christmas” provides a figure of a whole note, half note, quarter note, one eighth note, followed by two eighth notes equaling one quarter note.<sup>414</sup> When a concept is explained or defined at the top of the page, the Christmas carol will utilize that concept. “Away in a Manger” uses both dotted quarter notes and dotted half notes, with the title “Dotted Notes,” at the top of the page and a figure of dotted half notes equaling three quarter notes, followed by a dotted quarter note equaling three eighth notes, as shown in figure 5.5.

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<sup>412</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Christmas Book*, 2.

<sup>413</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Christmas Book*, 6.

<sup>414</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Christmas Book*, 12.

**Figure 5.5.** Introducing dotted notes in a Christmas carol. Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Christmas Book*, 14.

The page is titled "DOTTED NOTES" in the upper left. To the right is a black and white illustration of a Christmas scene: an angel with wings and a halo floats in the sky; a stable with a star on its roof is in the background; in the foreground, Mary and Joseph are kneeling, and three oxen and two donkeys are gathered around a manger. Below the illustration, the title "Away in a Manger" is centered. To the left of the illustration, text explains dotted notes: "A dot following a note equals half the time value of the note." It then shows two examples: a dotted quarter note equals two eighth notes or three sixteenth notes, and a dotted half note equals three quarter notes. Below this is a musical score for "Away in a Manger" in 3/4 time. The melody is on a treble clef staff, and the bass line is on a bass clef staff. The lyrics are: "A - way in a man - ger, no crib for a bed, The". The score includes various note values, including dotted notes, and fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above the notes.

Some concepts are discussed more thoroughly than the piece requires. In the Christmas Carol “O Come, All ye Faithful,” the editors define a rest as an “interval of silence. For every kind of note, there is also a rest equal to the same amount of time,” followed by a figure of a whole note and whole rest, half note and half rest, quarter note and quarter rest, and eighth note and eighth rest.<sup>415</sup> The Christmas Carol “O Come, All ye Faithful,” employs only quarter rests and whole rests.

The *Piano Study Series* was originally conceived without the *Preparatory Book* and *Christmas Book*, beginning with *Grade 1* through *Grade 5*. The *Preparatory Book* and the *Christmas Book* in the *Piano Study Series* were compiled after the publication of *Grade 1* through *Grade 5*, reflecting the need for a slower pace of learning at the start

<sup>415</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Christmas Book*, 22.

of piano study for the average piano student. These two books in the series alone are dedicated to a slower learning approach to piano study. The *Piano Study Series* encompasses a wide range of levels, starting with the fundamentals of beginning piano study in the *Preparatory Book* and *Christmas Book* to advanced pieces found in *Grade 5*.

### **Grade 1 through Grade 5**

#### *GRADE 1*

The *Piano Study Series, Grade 1* through *Grade 5*, is a graded, sequenced, comprehensive and meticulous approach to studying piano, each including the study of repertoire, ear training, sight reading and technique. Nelson wrote *Grade 1* initially, before the *Preparatory Book*, and intended the basics to be learned immediately at the onset of piano lessons. In *Grade 1*, the message to the student in the “To Begin With...” section states the necessity of learning the names of all the musical notes and memorizing their location on the keyboard and the staff.

In *Grade 1*, Nelson suggests to regularly drill note names of the lines and spaces to attain facility in reading music. The importance of the note names on the keyboard itself and the note names on the staff is emphasized by Nelson by including the notes on the treble clef, the bass clef, and the grand staff on page four. The end of the “To Begin With...” section directs the student to the Flashcards included in the last four pages of *Grade 1*. The Flashcards can be cut out of the book and further into individual flashcards, intended for daily use. Bullet points with the title “To the student” are



included for every piece in *Grade 1*. Nelson includes notes to the parent, to the student and to the teacher throughout each grade.

This series is intended for piano study beginning at an early age, which Nelson believes requires parent involvement. The editors stress parent involvement from the start of the series. Before any music is presented, a page entitled “To Begin With...,” dedicates a special message to the parent and the student. In the message to the parent, the editors stress the importance of parent involvement stating, “For even the most talented child needs help in maintaining the discipline of regular practice.”<sup>416</sup> The editors urge the parents to monitor the progress of their child, regardless of previous piano study of the parent; the clear presentation of material and user-friendly nature of this series is accessible to the parent with no previous music study. “To the parent” bullet points are included for many of the pieces toward the beginning of *Grade 1*, and less frequently toward the end of the book.

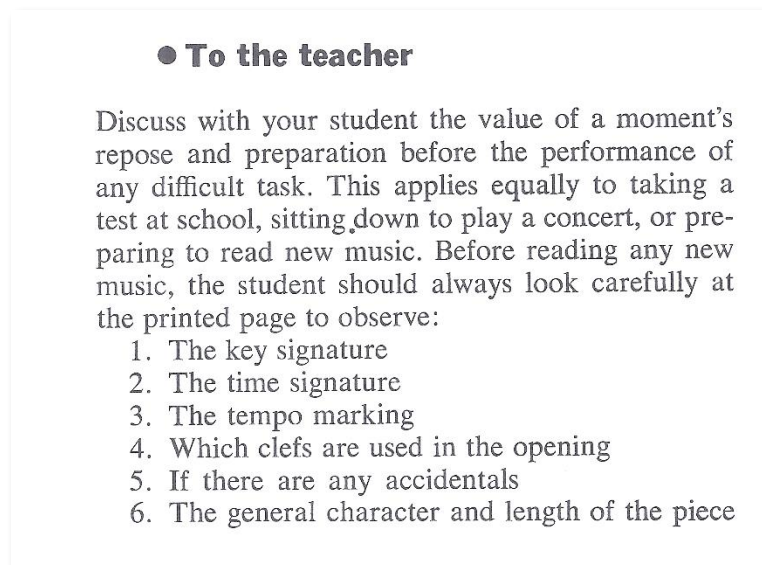
Nelson also includes notes directed to the teacher. “To the teacher” bullet point markings are included on seven of the thirty three pieces toward the beginning of the book. The “To the teacher” remarks include a wide range of comments including suggestions for what should be practiced in a particular piece daily, what to emphasize with the student when discussing the piece, what purpose to use the piece with the student, technical requirements that should be taught in conjunction with the piece presented, the importance of sight reading, editorial markings made by the composer and how to convey these concepts to the student. As seen in figure 5.6, the last “To the

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<sup>416</sup> Allison Nelson and Harry Neal, *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series: Grade 1* (Chicago, IL: Manorhouse Press, 1965), 3.

teacher” bullet point provides suggestions for how to prepare before a performance of any difficult task:

**Figure 5.6.** “To the teacher” bullet point message. Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Grade 1*, 17.



Manhorhouse Press includes a publisher's preface on the inside cover of each of the *Piano Study Series* books, *Grade 1* through *Grade 5*, that explains the purpose of the series and how the books are to be used:

The material in this series of graded Study Books was collected by the duo-pianists Nelson and Neal for the use in the musical training of their own children. No one could have been better qualified to prepare such material. Allison Nelson and Harry Neal both have Musical Doctorates, and they have played more concerts during the last ten years than any other two-piano team in the world. They are probably the only artists in North America who serve simultaneously on the faculties of five colleges and universities. *This is the only published series in which the balanced study requirements of an entire grade level may be found in one volume.*

It covers repertoire, ear training, sight reading and technical requirements for each grade level. Each book of this series is complete and is not dependent upon any other. Although the books are planned to be studied in sequence, any book may be used by itself alone; a new student may be introduced to any of the books at any time. And of course they may be used with supplementary material.

Only a great artist and teacher could have produced these books. There is no other study series available for the young pianist, which presents the composer's original version with such meticulous scholarship, while distinguishing the Editors' markings by the use of small type or brackets. This offers a unique advantage in musicianship training, for the young pianist is too seldom shown the difference between an editor's suggestions (with which he may disagree) and the composer's instructions (with which he may not).

This is the only available piano series which meets all examination requirements in this country as well as the artistic standards set by the major foreign examination boards.<sup>417</sup>

The high quality repertoire Nelson selected for the *Piano Study Series* in all grades represents composers from the Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Twentieth Century eras. Repertoire chosen for *Grade 1* are by the following composers: Gurlitt, Türk, Beyer, Stravinsky, Bertini, Bartók, Czerny, Müller, Shostakovich, André, Kabalevsky, R. Schumann, Anna Magdalena Bach, Rebikov, Mozart, Beethoven, Burgmüller, Köhler, Bacon and three pieces composed by Allison Nelson. None of the pieces exceeds one page in length and the level varies from level 2 to 5 in *Grade 1* repertoire.<sup>418</sup> The pieces by composers include "Little Piece" Op. 68, No. 5, by Schumann (level 2),<sup>419</sup> "Frankness" Op. 100, No. 1, by Burgmüller (level 4),<sup>420</sup> "Minuet in F Major" K. 2, by Mozart (level 4),<sup>421</sup> "Night on the River" Op. 27, No. 4, by

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<sup>417</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Grade 1*, inside front cover.

<sup>418</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all references to repertoire "level" numbers are from Jane Magrath's *Pianist's Guide to the Standard Teaching and Performance Literature* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Music, 1995).

<sup>419</sup> Magrath, 238.

<sup>420</sup> Magrath, 132.

<sup>421</sup> Magrath, 102.

Kabalevsky (level 3)<sup>422</sup> and “Sonatine” Op. 34, No. 1, first movement, by André (level 5).<sup>423</sup>

The pieces written by Allison Nelson in *Grade 1* are entitled “Skipping”, “Bouncing the Ball” and “Happy Song”. The descriptive titles for Nelson’s pieces characterize the technique to be learned for that piece: “Skipping” uses mostly descending thirds in both hands, written as two note-slurs; “Bouncing the Ball” incorporates staccatos on all notes; and “Happy Song” is accompanied by the following instruction in the “To the student” bullet point, written by the editors:

The faster you play Happy Song, the happier it will sound. Remember, however, that it must go no faster than you can play the left-hand triplets. If you have to slow down for a difficult place, you are going too fast. Stop and practice the difficult passages! When three notes are played in the time you would normally give two of them, those notes are triplets....<sup>424</sup>

*Grade 1* includes thirty-three compositions in a graded order of study. Nelson specifies the technical requirements to be met by the end of each grade.

Nelson also sets a sight-reading standard at the end of each grade, although no sight reading activities are included as part of the curriculum in the *Piano Study Series*. Although daily sight reading activities are not included in each grade, Nelson provides guidelines concerning sight-reading ability at the end of each grade, leaving the supplemental sight reading to the discretion of the teacher.

Ear training examples are provided immediately following sight reading examples for each grade. The ear training requirements at the end of each grade reflect

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<sup>422</sup> Magrath, 397.

<sup>423</sup> Magrath, 50.

<sup>424</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Grade 1*, 30.

the musicianship skills the student should have developed through the study of the repertoire pieces and technical requirements. Musical examples are provided for the teacher for each Ear Training activity in this grade and each subsequent grade.

*Grade 1* includes brief biographical information of all composers in this book and a glossary of musical terms and signs. No more than two sentences are used to describe each composer. All musical terms and signs defined in the Glossary are derived from the pieces in *Grade 1*. Each composer is identified by birth and death dates (when applicable), nationality and one or two distinguishing features, anecdotes, or facts about the composer. Ludwig van Beethoven, for example, is described in the following three sentences: “One of the greatest composers. Wrote thirty-two sonatas for piano. Became totally deaf in his later years.”<sup>425</sup> The end of each subsequent grade (*Grade 2* through *Grade 5*) follows the same format as *Grade 1*, and includes a glossary of terms used in the book, brief biographical information of all the composers represented in each grade in addition to Flashcard cutouts.

## GRADE 2

The repertoire Nelson chose for *Grade 2* are composed by many of the same composers found in *Grade 1*. The following composers are represented in the *Grade 2* repertoire selection: Heller, Burgmüller, Schmitt, Lichner, Türk, Bertini, R. Schumann, Stravinsky, J. S. Bach, Beethoven, Shostakovich, Türk, Allison Nelson, Alt, André, Mozart, Rebikov, Reinecke, von Wilm, Kullak, Bartók, Tchaikovsky, Dussek, Bacon,

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<sup>425</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Grade 1*, 43.

and Gretchaninoff. Most of the repertoire in *Grade 2* is on one printed page, with no pieces exceeding three pages in length. Measure numbers are not included in any pieces in any of the grades. Selections of repertoire include “The Sick Doll” (from *Album for the Young*) Op. 39, No. 6, by Tchaikovsky (level 3),<sup>426</sup> “Strolling Musicians” (from *Silhouettes*) Op. 31, No. 2, by Rebikov (level 4),<sup>427</sup> “Allegro K. 3” by Mozart (level 4),<sup>428</sup> and “Out for a Walk” (from *The Grandfather’s Book*) Op. 119, No. 12 by Gretchaninoff (level 4)<sup>429</sup>.

The repertoire in *Grade 2* is grouped into studies, sonatinas, repertoire and ends with technical requirements. A total of six pieces (or exercises) by Duvernoy, Czerny, Herller, Burgmüller, and Löschhorn are included in the studies category, three sonatinas by Schmitt, Lichner and Türk are included in the sonatinas section (one movement from each sonatina), and twenty-two additional pieces are included in the repertoire category.

The pieces are sequenced in *Grade 2* in order of difficulty. Therefore, pieces designated as studies and sonatinas are mixed in with repertoire. The first piece in *Grade 2* is “Prelude No. 2” (from *Twelve Little Pieces* and *Preludes*) by Bertini. The note titled “To the teacher” in the foreword states the following in using *Grade 2*:

The music in this book is arranged in approximate order of difficulty and should be used from beginning to end. If some music is skipped, the text should still be studied in full, as it contains information which a Grade II student should know. Supplementary Grade II requirements are shown in the back of this book and should be introduced gradually throughout the year. The Technical Exercises (also in the back of the book) are to be used at the discretion of the teacher. The

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<sup>426</sup> Magrath, 252.

<sup>427</sup> Magrath, 477.

<sup>428</sup> Magrath, 102.

<sup>429</sup> Magrath, 380.

Editors suggest that the teacher discuss all the text in the volume with each student and that parents be urged to read the text as well.<sup>430</sup>

Two repertoire pieces are composed by Nelson: “Going to Church” and “Blue-haired Doll.” According to the “To the student” note:

“Blue-haired Doll” was written by one of the editors for her eight-year-old daughter, who has just such a doll. It is a very pretty little doll, but there is something slightly out-of-tune about that blue hair. When making *crescendos*, or observing other markings, see if your mother can actually hear the difference in your sound. Very often people feel these changes inside themselves, without ever making a change in sound with their fingers. Be careful to observe the phrasing instructions in the left hand.<sup>431</sup>

This note from the editors shows the attention to artistry and sensitivity with each of the pieces included in this series, whether the pieces are written by the editors or by a classical composer, such as Mozart. In addition, this note demonstrates that the parent, specifically the mother, was assumed to play an active role in the piano study of the student.

An extensive note to the teacher is included which addresses rhythm, phrasing, and balance in detail:

From this point on, the student should give increasing attention to the tonal variety required to create good rhythm, phrasing and balance. At first the instruction should be in very simple terms, dealing with obvious up-beats and accents; it may be a matter of years before the student can treat rhythm, phrasing or balance with any great subtlety or polish. The Editors feel that it is nevertheless wise to include here a general statement of principles which the teacher may treat as a point of departure.<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> Allison Nelson and Harry Neal, *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series: Grade 2* (Chicago, IL: Manorhouse Press, 1965), 4.

<sup>431</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Grade 2*, 28.

<sup>432</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Grade 2*, 25.

The editors make the following suggestion for phrasing at this juncture in

*Grade 2:*

Every phrase or musical idea has a peak; it should move in a crescendo toward that peak, and then fall away from it gracefully. Because the most important natural rhythmic pulse falls on the first beat of each measure, phrase peaks are frequently found on this beat....The student should be trained to watch for these marks. Where there's no indication from the composer, the Editors have often, in these volumes, offered suggestions for the student's assistance. These suggestions are invariably in brackets or smaller type. The student should play such phrases to himself, testing whether they seem natural to him as suggested. Whatever peak he chooses must be one which is plainly heard.<sup>433</sup>

The editors suggest all scales to be played two notes to a beat, with the metronome set at 100, in addition to the following: "Scales are to be played evenly and legato from memory, and are to be practiced both forte and piano. The Editors suggest repeating the key signature aloud each time a scale is played."<sup>434</sup> This suggestion is also made for scales in *Grade 3* through *Grade 5*.

### *GRADE 3*

From *Grade 3* through *Grade 5*, the repertoire level ranges from level 5 to 10 and are intended for the serious piano student. While original compositions by Allison Nelson are included in the *Preparatory Book, Grade 1* and *Grade 2*, no original compositions by Nelson are included in *Grade 3, Grade 4* and *Grade 5*. The organization for *Grade 3* is grouped into studies, sonatas, repertoire and supplement. This organization of pieces into the same categories remains consistent for *Grade 4* and

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<sup>433</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Grade 2*, 26.

<sup>434</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Grade 2*, 53.



*Grade 5.* Four pieces (or exercises) by Lemoine, Duvernoy, Czerny, and Burgmüller are included in the studies category, three sonatinas by Beethoven, Clementi and Diabelli are included in the sonatinas section, and twenty pieces of standard teaching literature by classical composers represent the repertoire section.

Representative pieces include “The Lame Witch Lurking in the Forest” (from *Silhouettes*) Op. 31, No. 9, Rebikov (level 5)<sup>435</sup> *Sonatina in C Major*, Op. 36, No. 1 by Clementi, all three movements included (level 4),<sup>436</sup> “Ringing Bells” (from *Lyrical Pieces*) Op. 54, No. 6, by Grieg (level 6),<sup>437</sup> and “Toccata” Op. 27, No. 8, by Kabalevsky (level 6).<sup>438</sup>

Pieces do not exceed three pages in length, with the exception of Clementi’s *Sonatina in C Major*, Op. 36, No. 1. All three movements of Clementi’s *Sonatina in C Major*, Op. 36 are included in this volume. The editors provide a note in a bullet point addressed “To the student” that discusses the sonata form. The note states in part,

For your first complete sonatina in this Piano Study Series, you are to learn the Clementi *Sonatina* Op. 36, No. 1. You should enjoy it, for this is the most famous sonatina ever written. The sonatina (small sonata) takes its name from the sonata form, which is often used in the first movement. Much of the world’s greatest music is written in this form; understanding it will help you to learn and remember your music.”<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>435</sup> Magrath, 477.

<sup>436</sup> Magrath, 78.

<sup>437</sup> Magrath, 171.

<sup>438</sup> Magrath, 398.

<sup>439</sup> Allison Nelson and Harry Neal, *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series: Grade 3* (Chicago, IL: Manorhouse Press, 1965), 33.

Nelson discusses the three parts to sonata form, the exposition, development and recapitulation, in detail one page before the score is presented. The final paragraph in the “To the student” note, states the following:

Many early composers loved musical surprises and frequently wrote sudden fortes or sudden pianos. Don’t spoil these surprises by making a crescendo or diminuendo where they are not indicated. In the second movement, be sure to begin your trills on the note above the given note. Clementi clearly showed you his wishes when he wrote in the original fingering (large type).<sup>440</sup>

“To the teacher” messages are included in the foreword of each grade in the *Piano Study Series*; each “To the teacher” message is slightly different, offering varying suggestions. The “To the teacher” message found in the foreword of *Grade 1* is repeated almost verbatim in *Grade 2*, *Grade 3* and *Grade 4* for the first paragraph and is followed by two supporting paragraphs. Each supporting paragraph is slightly different in each grade. The following supporting paragraphs in *Grade 3* provide:

The Editors suggest that a Grade III student should practice one-and-a-half hours each day, but in no case should the practice time be less than an hour. The student’s assignment should include both repertoire and supplementary material. Scales and other technical requirements may be divided, so that a portion of them is practiced each day. It is suggested that approximately twenty minutes daily be devoted to this supplementary material.

The text in this book is divided into sections. Young students will need these sections explained carefully, and it is suggested that a new section be assigned weekly. It is often helpful to enroll the students of a given grade in a weekly class for this supplementary material.<sup>441</sup>

The supplement section is included in *Grade 3*, *Grade 4* and *Grade 5*, addressing different technical and musical aspects including rhythm, phrasing, balance, scales, arpeggios, chords and cadences and ten brief technical exercises that address

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<sup>440</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Grade 3*, 33.

<sup>441</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Grade 3*, 4.

different technical aspects. The discussion on rhythm, phrasing and balance are repeated identically in *Grade 4* and *Grade 5*. The technical exercises in *Grade 3* address a variety of techniques such as repeated notes, two against three exercises, tucking of the thumb, how to play a turn, left hand leaps and hands together staccato intervals. Technical exercises are included only for *Grade 1*, *Grade 2* and *Grade 3*. See figure 5.7 for a few examples found in *Grade 3*:

**Figure 5.7.** Examples of technical exercises. Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Grade 3*, 73.

Figure 5.7 displays five numbered technical exercises from Nelson and Neal's *Piano Study Series: Grade 3*, page 73. The exercises are as follows:

- Exercise 6:** Right hand only, D major. (Example: ∞). The notation shows a single melodic line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 below the notes.
- Exercise 7:** Right hand only, F major. (Example: ♯). The notation shows a single melodic line in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 below the notes.
- Exercise 8:** Left hand only, as written. The notation shows a single melodic line in bass clef. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 below the notes.
- Exercise 9:** Left hand only, F major. The notation shows a single melodic line in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 below the notes.
- Exercise 10:** C major only. The notation shows a two-staff exercise (treble and bass clef) in C major. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 below the notes.

**Note for Exercise No. 10:** Practice very slowly, hands separately. The hand should rest lightly on the keyboard with the fingers placed in position on the keys. As the keys are depressed, the hand should bounce back into the air instantly, with the wrist quite loose. Only the hand should move, not the arm. If the wrist is sufficiently loose the hand will fall back lightly on the keys.

## GRADE 4

The organization of pieces included in *Grade 4* is identical to *Grade 3*: studies, sonatinas, repertoire, and supplement. Representative pieces in this book, ranging from repertoire level 5 through 9, include “Etude enfantine” Op. 37, No. 3 by Lemoine (level

7-8),<sup>442</sup> “Evening in the Country” (from *Ten Easy Pieces*) by Bartók (level 5),<sup>443</sup> *Prelude* Op. 34, No. 13 by Shostakovich (level 9),<sup>444</sup> and “Tango” Op. 165, No. 2 by Albeniz (level 9).<sup>445</sup>

Nelson includes seventeen pieces in *Grade 4*, written by the following composers: J.S. Bach, Gretchaninoff, Beethoven, MacDowell, Mozart, Grieg, Bartók, Schumann, Couperin, Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, Rebikov, Chopin, Kabalevsky, Prokofieff, Schubert and Albeniz. All pieces are typically one to two pages, with the exception of the sonatinas which include all movements, therefore each sonatina can be up to seven pages. The final piece in *Grade 3* is “Tango” Op. 154, No. 2 by Albeniz.

The following “To the teacher” message is included by the editors in *Grade 4*:

The normal Grade IV student should practice no less than one hour each day. If the student is serious or shows unusual promise, he may be encouraged to double that amount of time; if this is not possible throughout the school week, he should certainly do so on the days when he is not attending school. Each student’s assignment should include both repertoire and supplementary material. Scales and other technical requirements may be divided, so that a portion of them is practiced each day.<sup>446</sup>

Nelson includes “Norwegian Dance” from *Lyrical Pieces* Op. 47, No. 4 by Edvard Grieg perhaps to challenge the skill memorization for the student. Nelson makes the following note to the student before presenting them with the piece:

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<sup>442</sup> Magrath, 199.

<sup>443</sup> Magrath, 273.

<sup>444</sup> Magrath, 499.

<sup>445</sup> Magrath, 188.

<sup>446</sup> Allison Nelson and Harry Neal, *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series: Grade 4* (Chicago, IL: Manorhouse Press, 1965), 3.

Train yourself to learn and memorize new music quickly. See how rapidly you can learn this “Norwegian Dance.” First, look at the key signature and the time signature. Notice the tempo indication. When you read the work through, look for repeated patterns.

Observe your bass. If you are not alert, you might play all the way through “Norwegian Dance” glancing at the bass constantly to read your next notes. Look at the bass carefully to see if there is something about it which makes it easy to learn.

Study the right hand part. You should see that the melody is divided up into small sections which are repeated. You may wish to mark these sections in your music, but respect your book by writing neatly and lightly. You should learn and memorize this composition more quickly than any you have yet studied.

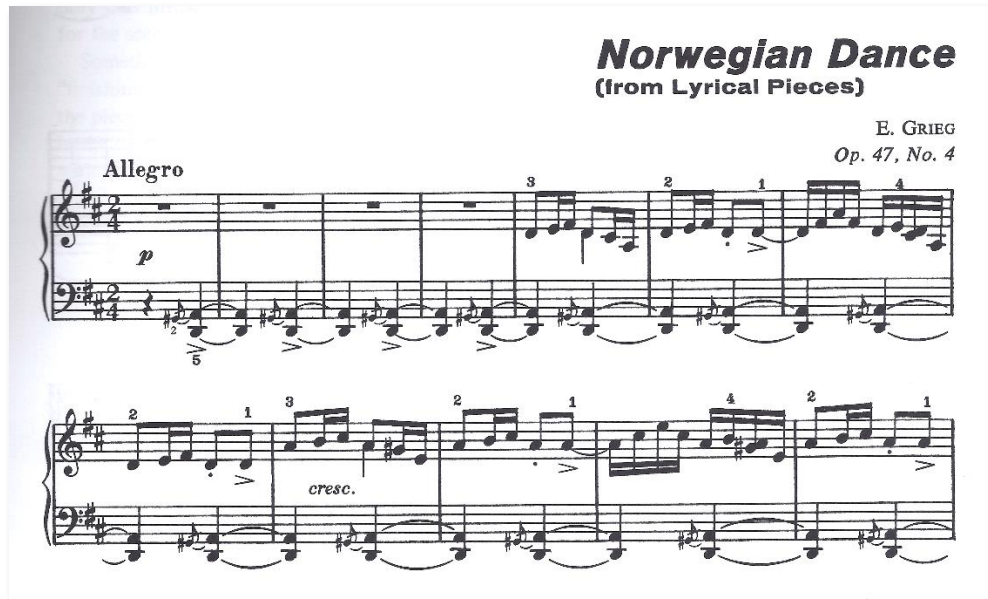
In one corner of each page of music you learn, write down the amount of time it takes you to memorize the music. Be sure to write in small, neat letters. Run a race with yourself and try to learn each page of new music more quickly than you learned the last.<sup>447</sup>

“Norwegian Dance” is a short and tuneful piece (see figure 5.8) that uses the same notes in the left hand throughout. This allows the student to concentrate on the right hand melody, allowing for a quicker rate of memorization.

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<sup>447</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Grade 4*, 14.

**Figure 5.8.** “Norwegian Dance.” Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Grade 4*, 15.



#### GRADE 5

The organization of *Grade 5* is identical to *Grade 3* and *Grade 4*: studies, sonatas, repertoire and supplement. Nelson includes fifteen pieces in *Grade 5* including *Six Easy Variations on a Swiss Song*, by Beethoven (level 7),<sup>448</sup> *Prelude in E Major*, BWV 854, by J.S. Bach from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I (advanced), *Prelude* Op. 28, No. 3, by Chopin (advanced), and *Arabesque I*, by Debussy (level 8).<sup>449</sup> The repertoire selection in *Grade 5* is generally at an advanced level. Many of the pieces are suitable for today’s undergraduate freshman piano majors.

Nelson states the following in the “To the teacher” message in *Grade 5*:

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<sup>448</sup> Magrath, 67.

<sup>449</sup> Magrath, 334.

The normal Grade V student should practice no less than ten hours each week. If the student is serious, or shows unusual promise, he should be encouraged to double that amount of time. Each student's assignment should include both repertoire and supplementary material. Scales and other technical requirements may be divided, so that a portion of them is practiced each day.

The text of this book is divided into sections. Each section should be explained carefully to the student, and it is suggested that a new section be assigned regularly. It is often helpful to enroll the students of a given grade in a weekly class for the study of this material.<sup>450</sup>

In *Grade 3*, the editors dedicated a page in the "To the student" section to discuss sonata form. In *Grade 5*, the editors discuss the fugue and its form in the "To the Student" section on page 15:

Here is a new and fascinating form for you to study. The fugue is a form of writing in which a definite number of parts or voices combine in stating and developing a single theme. The restrictions of fugue writing have always served as a challenge which excited composers into producing their finest works. Perhaps you remember that the sonata form has an exposition, development and recapitulation. The fugue form is somewhat similar, having an exposition and a development leading into a climax and coda.<sup>451</sup>

After discussing the three parts of a fugue, the editors ask the following question of the student: "One more thing: When the answer repeats exactly the intervals used in the subject, the fugue is called a real fugue. When any of the intervals are changed, it is called a tonal fugue. Can you tell whether this fugue is real or tonal?"<sup>452</sup>

This description of fugue form is preceded by a work by Reinecke called "Two-voice Fugue on 'I Went Out Last Evening'" Op. 176, No. 29. The musical example (see figure 5.9) presents the subject and answer of the first several bars. The editors write in

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<sup>450</sup> Allison Nelson and Harry Neal, *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series: Grade 5* (Chicago, IL: Manorhouse Press, 1965), 3.

<sup>451</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Grade 5*, 15.

<sup>452</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Grade 5*, 15.

the words subject, counter-subject and answer into the score. The words exposition, development and climax are also included in the score to identify those sections in the piece.

**Figure 5.9.** Fugue parts labeled in “Two-voice Fugue on ‘I Went Out Last Evening.’” Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Grade 5*, 16.

**Two-voice Fugue on  
"I Went Out Last Evening"**

Exposition  
*Vivace* (Subject) (Counter-subject) (Answer) (Extra-entry)

C. REINECKE  
Op. 176, No. 29

Development

*mf* *p* *cresc.*

Piano students who follow the *Piano Study Series* closely and work diligently through the sight reading, ear training, repertoire and technical studies from *Grade 1* to



end of *Grade 5* will have gained a strong musical education and the foundation necessary for advanced piano studies. High school students who are able to play the repertoire found in *Grade 5* will be prepared for a more serious study at the collegiate level.

### **Theory Books**

The *Piano Study Series* includes three levels of theory books. The inside covers of *Theory Book 1*, *Theory Book 2* and *Theory Book 3* each include a message entitled “To the Teacher” and “how to use this book,” and are identical in each book. They provide insight into the pedagogical approach of theory study in piano lessons. The “To the Teacher” message states the following:

The authors of the Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series believe that the study of the theory of music as an isolated subject is next to meaningless. The analysis of how music is made takes on real significance only when it is put into practice at the keyboard. For this reason, the written work in this book is tied as closely as possible to the student’s repertoire.

While the following assignments are correlated with specific repertoire in the NELSON AND NEAL SERIES, this work book may be used equally well with any other series or repertoire at the same level of difficulty.<sup>453</sup>

The “How to use this book” message on the inside cover explains how to use these books in conjunction with the *Teacher’s Manual*. The editors state the following in the “How to use this book” section:

The large number in the upper corner of each page corresponds with the Lesson Plan of the same number in the Teacher’s Manual. The page number at the bottom tells you on which page of the NELSON AND NEAL Piano Book you

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<sup>453</sup> Allison Nelson and Harry Neal, *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series: Theory Book 1* (Chicago, IL: Manorhouse Press, 1970), inside cover.

will find those particular problems. A large dot appears every time there is something for the student to do.<sup>454</sup>

An exam at the end of each theory book tests the concepts taught throughout each level. In *Theory Book 1*, the exam asks the student to draw a treble clef, draw a bass clef, write a D major scale in whole notes ascending and descending ending with the triad in the treble clef, write four measures of 4/4 time using various notes and rests, write the abbreviations of piano, forte, mezzo forte, sforzandi, number harmonic intervals up to an octave and lastly for the student to identify the difference between a phrase marking, a slur, and a tie in only a four bar phrase. See figure 5.10 for the musical example that includes a phrase marking, slur and a tie:

**Figure 5.10.** Theory test example. Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Theory Book 3*, 32.

7. Indicate with P (phrase), S (slur) or T (tie) which of the curved lines is a phrase, slur or tie.

In *Theory Book 2*, the exam requires the students to write an ascending, one-octave scale in B major in the treble clef, write the five black keys in whole notes in the bass clef (written first as sharped notes, then as flats), to draw the E minor triad with both inversions in whole notes in the treble clef using the key signature, to write a plagal cadence in G major, draw perfect and major intervals on designated pitches, draw

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<sup>454</sup> Nelson and Neal, *Piano Study Series: Theory Book 1*, inside cover.

primary triads in the key of D major, and define the meanings of the following terms: *leggiero*, *sostenuto*, *sempre*, *vivace*, *andante* and *forte*.

In *Theory Book 3*, students are expected to be able to understand and write out the following: write the D harmonic minor scale in the treble clef in quarter notes for one octave ascending only, write the F major triad with two inversions in the treble clef in whole notes, write two measures of 6/8 time using various note and rest values, draw three musical symbols, draw the harmonic intervals indicated onto a staff, write the key signatures for B major, A minor, D minor and G major, and circle the half steps of the five second intervals provided.

### **Perspectives on the *Piano Study Series***

The *Piano Study Series*, specifically *Grade 1* through *Grade 5*, is a graded anthology of the standard teaching literature from an early intermediate to an advanced level intended for a complete course of piano study in combination with the *Preparatory Book* and *Christmas Book*. The *Preparatory Book* reflects the fundamentals of basic note learning, introduction to basic rhythms and a few dynamics. The *Christmas Book* can be used in conjunction with the *Preparatory Book* through *Grade 1*. While most beginning average-age piano method books sequence material over several volumes, only Nelson and Neal's *Preparatory Book* and *Christmas Book* closely resemble this approach.

The majority of the *Piano Study Series*, *Grade 1* through *Grade 5*, is devoted to high quality piano teaching literature. A brief review introduces basic fundamentals at the beginning of *Grade 1* before moving on to the presentation of standard teaching

literature throughout the remainder of the grades. The pacing of literature begins from learning middle C in the *Preparatory Book* to advanced repertoire by *Grade 5*, representing a vast range of levels available in one piano learning series.

The Nelson and Neal *Piano Study Series* reflects a serious approach to piano study. The amount of practice time expected of students is made explicitly clear by Nelson in notes to the parent, student and teacher. Parent involvement is expected for the student to experience optimal success. This series is comprehensive in the theory, technique, ear training, sight reading and repertoire required of each grade. A student who implements the *Piano Study Series* in their music study will gain an understanding of different forms, prominent composers and a broad scope of music history.

The selection of advanced-level repertoire in *Grade 5* sets a high standard which piano students are expected to meet by the end of the *Piano Study Series*. Although each of the books of this series is not dependent on any other and can be used by itself, a piano student who follows this series from start to finish will receive a comprehensive musical education and will be able to play the piano at an advanced level by *Grade 5*. These high standards are reflective of Nelson's personal experience as seen in her dedication to a thorough musical education from an early age.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONTRIBUTIONS TO PIANO ENSEMBLE LITERATURE AS AN EDITOR THROUGH THE ALFRED MASTERWORK SERIES**

#### **Introduction**

Nelson's contributions as a co-editor of piano ensemble literature for Alfred Music draw from her Nelson and Neal piano duo experiences and are also a product of her tenacious and thorough approach to collaborative writing and editing. Dr. E.L. Lancaster, vice president and keyboard editor-in-chief of Alfred Music, in reflecting on the piano ensemble works which Allison Nelson has co-edited, reports feeling "lucky that we were able to find someone who played all that to edit it," especially a "brilliant pianist" like Nelson.<sup>455</sup> Lancaster offers, by way of example, "Anybody can add fingerings to a piece, but if you haven't performed it, or if you haven't performed it a lot, then it's not as great."<sup>456</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> E.L. Lancaster, interview by author, tape recording, Los Angeles, CA, December 22, 2014.

<sup>456</sup> Lancaster, interview, December 22, 2014.

This chapter provides an overview of the seventeen publications which Allison Nelson has edited for Alfred Music (see Appendix B) and considers the ways that these Alfred editions contribute to the piano ensemble performance literature.<sup>457</sup> Prior to this overview, the chapter also briefly explores Nelson's approach to editing, the collaborative relationships between Nelson and Alfred Music and the working relationship between Nelson and her co-editor, Dr. Maurice Hinson.<sup>458</sup>

All works co-edited by Nelson for Alfred Music are either for one piano, four hands, or for two pianos, four hands, and share common editorial and presentation characteristics. Works for one piano, four hands, format the secondo part on the left-hand page, and the primo part on the right-hand page. For two pianos, four hand works, the piano one and piano two parts are stacked on top of one another to form one large grand staff. Works for one piano, four hands, indicate pedal markings to be performed by the primo player. A foreword is included for every collection, and although each foreword is specific to the collection, each collection provides background information on the composer of the work, details about the work and editorial markings, indicated clearly in each edition. Fingering and parenthetical material is editorial for each collection and measure numbers are included in all collections for ease of rehearsal.

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<sup>457</sup> An eighteenth publication co-edited by Allison Nelson and Maurice Hinson for Alfred Music is anticipated to be issued late in 2015: the Alfred Masterwork Edition of *Children's Suite (Cannons)* by Anton Arensky. Since the published edition was not available for review at the time of this study, it is not included here.

<sup>458</sup> Carol Bell is credited as co-editor of two of the titles in the series of works co-edited by Nelson for Alfred Music (*Slavonic Dances*, Op. 46 and *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 72 by Antonin Dvorák), but did preliminary work on the projects for Alfred Music before the two titles were given to Nelson and co-editor, Maurice Hinson, to edit and complete. As a result, there was no direct collaboration or relationship between Bell and co-editors Nelson and Hinson.

## **Editing Collaboration**

Nelson's reputation as a serious and dedicated performer and teacher mirrors her detailed approach to her editing. The authenticity of her editorial work with piano ensemble music is a strong component of the legacy Nelson will leave to the field of piano: "A hundred years from now I'm hoping that somebody else will go to a library to take out my editions for reference and that they can depend on them and know that they are the best and the highest quality that there is. The most authentic."<sup>459</sup>

Her detailed and thorough approach also shows in her relationship with Alfred Music, as seen through the eyes of Dr. E.L. Lancaster who notes:

Sometimes with lots of editors and authors there's a lot of hand holding, but not with her. ...She gets it done. She gets it in when she says she's going to get it in. So she's very efficient in that kind of way. I think she does a thorough job as opposed to some people with whom you have to keep going back and asking a lot of questions. ...She's thorough.<sup>460</sup>

Nelson's commitment to authenticity in her editorial work is confirmed by co-editor, Dr. Maurice Hinson:

She is absolutely dedicated to getting to the earliest edition, the earliest manuscript, whatever work we are working on. And her husband, he helps her somewhat with these scores. And so she's been very, very dedicated to getting scores from the Library of Congress, getting them from Russia, from Paris or wherever.... She has been able to come up with the first editions. She even has copies of a lot of the manuscripts, the original manuscripts. So she's phenomenal. She will not accept anything other than the earliest editions that are available on this planet.<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>460</sup> Lancaster, interview, December 22, 2014.

<sup>461</sup> Maurice Hinson, telephone interview by author, tape recording, February 18, 2015.

A life-long commitment to music and performing piano ensemble repertoire, beginning with first husband and duo partner Harry Neal, has provided Nelson with remarkable experience performing the repertoire she is editing. In fact, Nelson's continuing search for credible ensemble performance editions is what eventually led her into a relationship with Alfred Music.

Nelson had an interest for some time in playing all five of Ibert's *Histoires*.<sup>462</sup> While performing for a Yamaha dealer in California, the dealer had two or three of the pieces and gave them to Nelson.<sup>463</sup> "So I've always had this notion that I wanted to do the whole set, which are five. How to find the other two pieces?"<sup>464</sup> A former student of Nelson's, living in Europe, found one of the pieces for her in Paris. Maurice Hinson recalls that he "did a master class or workshop [at UTM]," and Nelson asked him if he knew the pieces.<sup>465</sup> Hinson reported that he had two or three of them, and after comparing their collections, it turned out that between the two of them, they had all five in the set.<sup>466</sup>

At that time Maurice Hinson had an existing relationship with Alfred Music and he suggested, according to Nelson, "You know, let's get Alfred to publish them. Maurice is sort of at the beginning of all of this collaboration and this is how it all got

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<sup>462</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015. Nelson explains that "Ibert wrote ten pieces called *Histoires* for piano solo ... but he also took five of them, including "The Little White Donkey," and made them into piano duets."

<sup>463</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>464</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>465</sup> Hinson, interview, February 18, 2015.

<sup>466</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.



started.”<sup>467</sup> Lancaster also reports that he connected with Nelson while doing a workshop for the Jackson Music Teachers’ Association during the same time period.<sup>468</sup> That series of coincidences led to Nelson’s working relationship with Hinson in co-editing the Alfred Masterwork edition of *Histoires* by Jacques Ibert in 2005.<sup>469</sup> After working on *Histoires*, Nelson and Hinson continued their collaborative efforts for Alfred Music, sometimes at the behest of Lancaster, and sometimes suggesting their own ideas for editions.<sup>470</sup>

Nelson’s approach to editing with Hinson demands careful research and a meticulous approach, as explained by Nelson:

You can’t believe how much time is put in to get the introduction just the way that satisfies [Alfred Music], that satisfies Maurice, that satisfies me, and set up on the page so that it fits on the page. ...Just for the introduction, not even for the music. ...And all of the stuff about performing... I’ve done that. Maurice does the initial research on the notes and then if there’s something special—because I’ve played all these works and know them all, we played them all from memory—that I know, any performing problems in them, what makes them a good performance, then I have to think about that. And we write all of this and I do all the fingering; and then of course do all the proof reading for all the notes. I play every note and every fingering in both parts before this is sent to the printer.<sup>471</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>468</sup> Lancaster, interview, December 22, 2014. Dr. Lancaster also reports other connections with Nelson, noting that “I grew up thirty miles from Paris, Tennessee, where she lived and as a child I knew Nelson and Neal.” He further states that “my first teaching position was at William Rainey Hartford College in Palatine, Illinois, and we had a workshop series every February in conjunction with the local music teachers’ association and I knew her by reputation and invited her to play a recital.”

<sup>469</sup> Jaques Ibert, *Histoires: For One Piano, Four Hands*, eds. Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson, Alfred Masterwork Edition (Los Angeles: Alfred Music, 2012).

<sup>470</sup> Lancaster, interview, December 22, 2014.

<sup>471</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

Hinson confirms that he sends Nelson his copy first, “And then she goes through my copy, sees what she likes or what she has a question about. She gets on the phone and calls me; and we just work it out, back and forth, mainly on the telephone.”<sup>472</sup> The same process holds for editorial markings in the music such as for pedaling and fingering according to Hinson. He adds fingering and pedaling, “And if she likes it, she keeps it. If she doesn’t like it, she calls me back and we talk about it, and we come to a conclusion and she puts that in and that’s our final pedaling, or fingering.”<sup>473</sup>

Nelson’s collaboration with Maurice Hinson is efficient and rewarding:

Maurice Hinson has been an absolute adorable love to work with. He’s wonderful to work with. Most of our work is done on the telephone, through the mail and on the telephone. . . . He is so thoughtful and generous in what he says. I mean he’ll send me pages of notes and everything with his own fingering put in. And he’ll say, do whatever you want to do, if you want to change how this is worded, if you want to leave out something, feel free. And he’s very generous that way. He’s never fussed about anything that I’ve done. I’ve tried always to keep the notes as much as he has written as possible.<sup>474</sup>

Hinson equally enjoys his co-editing work with Nelson:

She’s a first rate human being, personality, and musician. Just wonderful to work with. I enjoy talking with her every time we have a conversation. And I always learn from her almost every time and I hope she learns something from me. So yes, she’s an absolute wonderful joy to work with.<sup>475</sup>

Hinson’s view of Nelson is founded on respect and ease of communication. “I just feel like I’m the honored one to be able to work with her because she’s just so much

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<sup>472</sup> Hinson, interview, February 18, 2015.

<sup>473</sup> Hinson, interview, February 18, 2015.

<sup>474</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>475</sup> Hinson, interview, February 18, 2015.

fun to talk to.”<sup>476</sup> According to Hinson, Nelson’s work as an editor places her at the top of the list of editors and collaborators with whom he has worked:

Well I would say she’s just top notch. She’d be number one. I’ve worked with a number of other, different people, but Allison is just absolutely solid, and follows through every detail. She’s first rate. I would put her number one among all the people I’ve worked with throughout my lifetime.<sup>477</sup>

Many would view the editorial process as difficult and tedious work not suited for retirement, but not Nelson. She and her husband have taken it upon themselves to travel and to visit museums and libraries to find “reliable copies that we can depend on, and first editions and so on, the original authentic things.”<sup>478</sup> And regarding the work at this stage in her life, she adds, “I love the work. I feel as if I’m really doing something worthwhile. It keeps me occupied here in my old age.”<sup>479</sup> Nelson’s positive attitude and love for her work is reflected not only in her editing, but it defines her working relationships as well. In the words of Maurice Hinson, “She’s just a joy in everything that she does.”<sup>480</sup>

Nelson’s collaboration with Alfred Music and co-editor, Maurice Hinson, has obviously been satisfying work. She also credits her husband, Dr. David Loebbaka, for his careful and thoughtful assistance. For example, when she and Hinson took over the

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<sup>476</sup> Hinson, interview, February 18, 2015.

<sup>477</sup> Hinson, interview, February 18, 2015.

<sup>478</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>479</sup> Nelson, interview, January 8, 2015.

<sup>480</sup> Hinson, interview, February 18, 2015.

editing work for Dvorák's *Slavonic Dances* from Carol Bell,<sup>481</sup> Nelson explains that they were faced with many manuscripts, a vast amount of hand-written notes, Hungarian words and other items such as "names for the dances ... in the native language."<sup>482</sup> Nelson explains that Loebbaka "gets no credit for this," but that he was personally responsible for deciphering the handwritten notes, translating all the foreign wording, and getting the foreign language words correctly spelled.<sup>483</sup> "My David, my sweet David, was so instrumental in getting those pieces published intelligently, so that you can really understand them and know why they were written and what kind of dances they are. That's what David did."<sup>484</sup> One cannot help but conclude that Nelson's passion and appreciation for piano ensemble repertoire goes beyond the score and extends to both her professional and personal relationships.

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<sup>481</sup> Carol Bell and Digby Bell edited Brahms editions for Alfred Music and they had started work on Dvorák's *Slavonic Dances* when Digby Bell passed away. Carol Bell's work was passed on to Nelson and Hinson and they finished the editions without further input from Bell.

<sup>482</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>483</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

<sup>484</sup> Nelson, interview, January 9, 2015.

**Chaminade, *Le matin and Le soir (Morning and Evening)*, Op. 79:**  
**For Two Pianos, Four Hands**

Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson's edition of Chaminade's *Le matin and Le soir*, Op. 79, for Alfred Music, is for two pianos, four hands.<sup>485</sup> The foreword in this edition includes information about the composer, Cécil Chaminade (1857-1944) and her place among her contemporaries, Maurice Ravel and Claude Debussy. English translations in footnotes are provided by the editors for convenience, which appear in the *Le soir*, the second piece in this set. The six sources consulted for this edition by the editors provide the foreword with interesting anecdotes, including mention of a phenomenon that developed in the United States around the end of the nineteenth century:

...the formation of 'Chaminade Clubs' that mainly featured her music. An article of 1904 in *L'Echo Musical* listed 100 clubs, but Chaminade crossed out that figure in her copy, replacing it with 200.... Even as late as 1940, Chaminade Clubs were being organized.<sup>486</sup>

The technical accessibility of these works makes them suitable for undergraduate piano majors taking piano ensemble for the first time. This set of pieces embodies expressive melodies and lush harmonies with contrasting moods and characters. The form is indicated for both *Le matin* and *Le soir*—rondo—combining different characters and harmonies, making this work ideal for any program needing variety or contrast.

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<sup>485</sup> Cecile Chaminade, *Le matin and Le soir (Morning and Evening)*, Op. 79: *For Two Pianos, Four Hands*, eds. Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson, Alfred Masterwork Edition (Los Angeles: Alfred Music, 2015).

<sup>486</sup> Chaminade, *Le Matin and Le Soir*, Op. 79, 2.

**Chopin, *Rondo in C Major, Op. 73: For Two Pianos, Four Hands***

This edition of Frédéric Chopin's *Rondo in C Major, Op. 73*,<sup>487</sup> edited by Allison Nelson and Maurice Hinson, is for two pianos, four hands. The contents of the edition include a foreword with biographical information about Chopin, a description of the work including the form, editorial markings specific to this edition and six sources consulted by the editors. All fingerings are editorial, and parenthetical material includes suggestions by the editors. This edition is based on authoritative editions, listed in the foreword, including Schirmer's edition of *Rondo in C Major, Op. 73*, for two pianos, four hands. Conceived and written originally for solo piano,<sup>488</sup> the editors state one of the most important issues throughout the performance of the work will be balance between the two pianos. The melody is often heard in one part while the harmonic support occurs in the other; the editors direct the pianists to listen to the melody to be sure it is heard clearly at all times.<sup>489</sup>

The performer on piano one begins this work alone for the first four bars before the person playing piano two responds with a phrase played alone for four bars. A footnote by the editors, as seen in figure 6.1, provides direction as to how the opening passage from piano one may be played.

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<sup>487</sup> Frédéric Chopin, *Rondo in C Major, Op. 73: For Two Pianos, Four Hands*, eds. Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson, Alfred Masterwork Edition (Los Angeles: Alfred Music, 2012).

<sup>488</sup> Chopin. *Rondo in C Major, Op. 73*, 5.

<sup>489</sup> Chopin. *Rondo in C Major, Op. 73*, 6.

**Figure 6.1.** Opening passage. Chopin, *Rondo in C Major*, Op. 73, 5.

**Rondo in C Major**

Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)  
Op. 73

*Allegro maestoso*

I

*fz* (*p*) *veloce* *cresc.* *sva* -----

II

*Allegro maestoso*

*fz* (*p*)

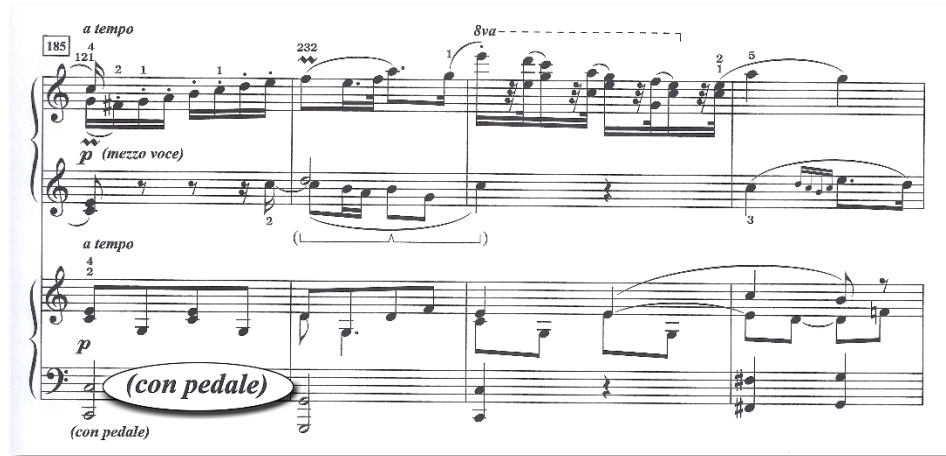
*sostenuto e legato*  
*p*

② Measures 1–3 and 9–11 can be played freely as an improvised introduction.

② Measures 1–3 and 9–11 can be played freely as an improvised introduction.

The editors include specific pedal markings in parentheses at certain times, while at other points they make general pedal suggestions indicated by *con pedale* also in parentheses. An example of this type of pedaling suggestion is shown in figure 6.2.

**Figure 6.2.** Example of pedal markings. Chopin, *Rondo in C Major, Op. 73, 24*.



### **Dvorák, *Slavonic Dances, Op. 46 and Op. 72***

The 2012 editions from Alfred Music of Antonin Dvorák's *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 46 and Op. 72,<sup>490</sup> edited by Carol Bell, Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson, include the following categories of information in the foreword: background on the composer, information about the music, editorial markings specific to the edition, bibliographic information for the three sources consulted and performances notes. The sources consulted for the *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 46 and Op. 72, are three different editions of the works, the original Simrock edition (1878), the Schirmer edition (1914) and the Dover edition (1992).<sup>491</sup>

<sup>490</sup> Antonin Dvorák, *Slavonic Dances, Op. 46: For One Piano, Four Hands*, eds. Carol Bell, Maurice Hinson, and Allison Nelson, Alfred Masterwork Edition (Los Angeles: Alfred Music, 2012); and Antonin Dvorák, *Slavonic Dances, Op. 72: For One Piano, Four Hands*, eds. Carol Bell, Maurice Hinson, and Allison Nelson, Alfred Masterwork Edition (Los Angeles: Alfred Music, 2012).

<sup>491</sup> Dvorák, *Slavonic Dances, Op. 46*, 4.



Pedal markings have not been added by the editors in either Op. 46 or Op. 72, nor did Dvorák indicate any pedaling marks in the manuscript. Metronome markings are included in parentheses for both sets of eight dances. A specific note about articulations in Op. 46 is included as follows: “The original edition is filled with accents that seem unnecessary, particularly when the dynamic level is fortissimo or where there is a sforzandi. The editors have removed the accents from this edition.”<sup>492</sup> Articulations in Op. 72 are described by the editors in the following note: “The accents in these pieces enhance the enthusiastic dance rhythms. The tenuto marks indicate legato, which should be accomplished by thoughtful use of fingering, rather than pedal.”<sup>493</sup>

For *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 46, editorial adjustments have been made for staccatos that appear inconsistent and to correct omitted accidentals, slurs and repeat signs. The editors note that while the order of “Dance No. 3” and “Dance No. 6” appear in reverse in some editions, this edition presents all dances in numerical order. The performance notes are brief for each dance and include the form of each dance and the specific folk elements that inspired each one.

Footnotes in this edition help explain note discrepancies in the original score and alleviate any fingering issues for the performers. Three footnotes are provided in this edition of *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 46. The first points out a note discrepancy: E-sharp in measure 63 of “Dance No. 3” might be a B, although the editors state that it is unclear.<sup>494</sup> The second footnote points out overlapping thumbs for the primo of “Dance

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<sup>492</sup> Dvorák, *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 46, 4.

<sup>493</sup> Dvorák, *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 72, 4.

<sup>494</sup> Dvorák, *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 46, 41.

No. 3”, and the third footnote provides an alternate fingering (see figure 6.3) to redistribute descending thirds written in the primo part of “Dance No. 5”, at measures 143-162.<sup>495</sup>

**Figure 6.3.** Alternate fingering notes. Dvorák, *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 46, 73.

139

*fz* *dim.* *p*

*pp* *f* *fz* *pp*

147

155

a) Alternate fingering. At the vivace tempo, measures 143-162 might be more playable divided between the hands.

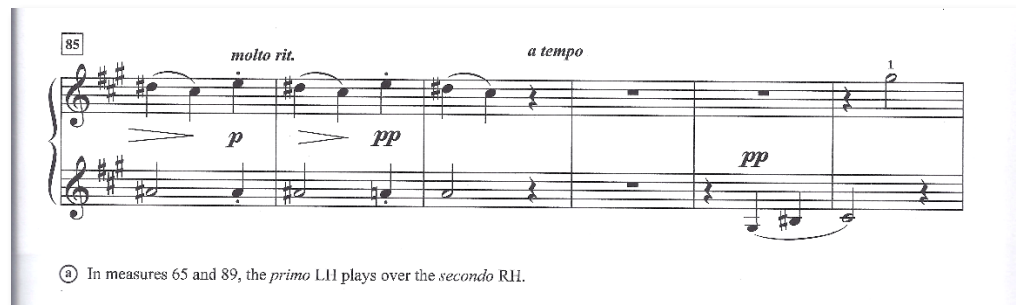
a) Alternate fingering. At the vivace tempo, measures 143-162 might be more playable divided between the hands.

The editors prepare the performers for hand crossings. One footnote in “Dance No. 8” of *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 72, as seen in figure 6.4, alerts the performers to the primo left hand playing over the secondo right hand in measures 65 and 89.<sup>496</sup> Figure 6.4 shows measure 89 and the explanatory footnote.

<sup>495</sup> Dvorák, *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 46, 73.

<sup>496</sup> Dvorák, *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 72, 95.

**Figure 6.4.** Primo left hand plays over secondo right hand. Dvorak, *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 72, 95.



### **Ibert, *Histoires: For One Piano, Four Hands***

Hinson and Nelson's edition of *Histoires* for Alfred Music includes information about the composer, Jacques Ibert, descriptions of each of the five movements of the work, a glossary of French terms, and information specific to this edition not found in other editions. The two sources consulted for this edition by the editors are a book by Wesley Roberts and an article written by Celia Mae Bryant.<sup>497</sup> The five pieces of *Histoires* were originally published separately by Leduc in 1922.<sup>498</sup> A brief historical background of Jacques Ibert followed by a short description of where these five pieces come from provide valuable insights into this work. The editors indicate that the music in this edition comes from a collection of ten pieces entitled *Histoires* (stories), composed in 1922; Ibert arranged five of the pieces from the collection of ten pieces

<sup>497</sup> Ibert, *Histoires*, 3; citing Wesley Roberts and his forthcoming book, *Jacques Ibert*, and Celia Mae Bryant, "Teaching *The Little White Donkey*," *Clavier*, 12:5 (May-June 1970).

<sup>498</sup> Ibert, *Histoires*, 2.

entitled *Histoires* for piano duet.<sup>499</sup> These pieces reflect Ibert's ability to depict images in his works. According to the editors, "The pictorial effects of these pieces demonstrate Ibert's ability to develop musical pictures in snapshot form, as well as his talent for blending transparent and strongly shaped ideas in a simple way."<sup>500</sup>

All editorial markings are indicated by parentheses, with the exception of fingerings. Ibert's fingerings appear in italics.<sup>501</sup> Although not mentioned in the foreword, all metronome markings are indicated with parentheses and serve as suggestions by the editors. The glossary of French terms includes English translations of all French terms found throughout the score of Ibert's *Histoires*. While many of Nelson's and Hinson's editions include English translations in parenthesis next to the original language, this work presents a glossary of terms at the back of the book instead. A few unique markings in Ibert's *Histoires* are explained in a footnote by the editors. Unconnected ties are placed throughout both primo and secondo parts. As shown in figure 6.5, each unconnected tie into a rest is footnoted and explained.

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<sup>499</sup> Ibert, *Histoires*, 3.

<sup>500</sup> Ibert, *Histoires*, 3.

<sup>501</sup> Ibert, *Histoires*, 2.

Figure 6.5. Opening. Ibert, *Histoires*, 4.

SECONDO

Jacques Ibert  
(1890–1962)

Un peu allant (♩. = ca. 72)

6

12

18 *en augmentant peu à peu*

24 *en pesant un peu*

*diminuez lentement*

(a) The unconnected "tie" is an indication to let the note ring.

(b) The unconnected "tie" is an indication to let the note ring.

**Mendelssohn, *Allegro brillant*, Op. 92: For One Piano, Four Hands**

In this edition of *Allegro brillant*, Op. 92, by Felix Mendelssohn,<sup>502</sup> Nelson and Hinson discuss: the three sources available for this work and the history of Mendelssohn's relationship with piano duets, relevant background information on Mendelssohn, the form of each movement and editorial and performance considerations for the pianist. The history of the three versions of *Allegro brillant*, Op. 92, is described in the foreword. The editors explain that the first version of Op. 92, titled *Allegro assai vivace*, is located in the Biblioteka Jagiellonska in Cracow, Poland and is in fact in Mendelssohn's handwriting. The version of *Allegro brillant* that the editors use for this edition is the second autograph of the work, dated March 26, 1841, by Mendelssohn and located in the Biblioteque Nationale in Paris. It includes both the *Andante* before leading into the *Allegro assai vivace*.<sup>503</sup> The five sources consulted for editorial considerations are listed in the foreword and include books written by Ernest Lubin (*The Piano Duet*), Cameron McGraw (*Piano Duet Repertoire*), Larry R. Todd (*Mendelssohn: A Life in Music*), and the Henle Verlag edition of Mendelssohn's works (*Werke für Klavier zu vier Händen*).<sup>504</sup>

In the editorial and performance considerations section of the foreword, it is noted that editorial markings in this edition, which are not included in the Henle Verlag

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<sup>502</sup> Felix Mendelssohn, *Allegro brillant*, Op. 92: For One Piano, Four Hands, eds. Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson, Alfred Masterwork Edition (Los Angeles: Alfred Music, 2012).

<sup>503</sup> Mendelssohn, *Allegro brillant*, Op. 92, 2.

<sup>504</sup> Mendelssohn, *Allegro brillant*, Op. 92, 3.

**Figure 6.6.** Suggestions for redistribution. Mendelssohn, *Allegro brillante*, Op. 92, 3.

<sup>505</sup> Mendelssohn, *Allegro brillante*, Op. 92, 2.

<sup>506</sup> Mendelssohn, *Allegro brillante*, Op. 92, 3.

<sup>507</sup> Mendelssohn, *Allegro brillante*, Op. 92, 3.

**Mendelssohn, *Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Op. 21: For  
One Piano, Four Hands**

Felix Mendelssohn's *Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Op. 21 has an extensive history. The Alfred Masterwork edition,<sup>508</sup> edited by Nelson and Hinson, includes the following: biographical information about Felix Mendelssohn, the history of the work, notes about the markings in this edition, performance notes, the form of the piece and the six sources consulted in compiling the edition. The editors provide a detailed history of the work, discussing the discrepancy between which came first, the four-hand arrangement of the *Overture*, Op. 21 or the orchestral version. The current edition is based on the duet manuscript dated 1829.<sup>509</sup> All markings in parenthesis are editorial, including the tempo markings.

The performance notes provided by the editors explain the light-hearted and humorous nature of this work, that it should not be taken too seriously and that Mendelssohn wrote this music so that the notes would lie easily under the hands in scales and repeated patterns.<sup>510</sup> A special note, made in regard to pedaling, offers additional advice:

A few pedal indications are from the manuscript, but there is no reason pedal should not be used for coloration on today's pianos. The final decision in pedaling comes from the ear—with careful listening—for it is impossible to indicate each shading and nuance of pedaling (flutter pedaling, brief touches of

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<sup>508</sup> Felix Mendelssohn, *Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Op. 21: For One Piano, Four Hands, eds. Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson, Alfred Masterwork Edition (Los Angeles: Alfred Music, 2012).

<sup>509</sup> Mendelssohn, *Overture*, 6.

<sup>510</sup> Mendelssohn, *Overture*, 6.



pedal, etc.) since some are so subtle as to be almost imperceptible. All pedaling should be handled by the primo player.<sup>511</sup>

Three footnotes appear in this edition, all directed toward the primo player. Two footnotes, as shown in figure 6.7, explain why note distribution (indicated in brackets on the score) between the left hand and right hand of the primo player appear in the score.

**Figure 6.7.** Notes for primo player. Mendelssohn, *Overture*, 19.

② These lower notes are more comfortable when played by the left hand.

③ The downstem RH notes here are more comfortable when played by the LH (as in measures 116-117).

④ These lower notes are more comfortable when played by the left hand.

⑤ The downstem RH notes here are more comfortable when played by the LH (as in measures 116-117).

<sup>511</sup> Mendelssohn, *Overture*, 6.

Only one other footnote, letter c in the score (see figure 6.8), provides specific pedaling instruction for the primo player despite the fact that pedaling instructions were stated in the foreword in the “About This Edition” section. Footnote c tells the primo player to pedal harmonically all the way to the end (found at measures 326 through measure 350, the very end).

**Figure 6.8.** Letter “c” note to primo player. Mendelssohn, *Overture*, 39.

325

331

338

343

*pp* *p*

*din.* *pp* *dol.* *pp* *ritardando*

*tranquillo*

c) Pedal harmonically all the way to the end.

**Moszkowski, *Spanish Dances, Op. 12: For One Piano, Four Hands***

In the Alfred Masterwork edition of Moszkowski's *Spanish Dances, Op. 12*,<sup>512</sup> Nelson and Hinson provide information about the composer, information about the music, details regarding the edition, the form of the pieces and the seven sources consulted in preparing the edition. Background information about Moritz Moszkowski includes his birthplace, where he studied, who he studied with and highlights of his career. The editors note that each of the five movements is in rondo form and they provide specific measure numbers for each section of each movement.<sup>513</sup> The historical context explained by the editors provides valuable insight into this work.

The editors mention the popularity of these dances during Moszkowski's lifetime, including that the *Spanish Dances, Op. 12* are probably his most famous piano works, and that at the time these works were composed (1871) very little Spanish music was available or even known.<sup>514</sup> The publication history of this work is described in detail in this edition, and many arrangements of this work (including solo piano and a combination of other instruments) have been published due most likely to the popularity of the work. Although the principal source for this edition is an edition released by Peters, the editors also mention the Carl Simon (Berlin) imprint, and an article by Moszkowski himself, "How I Wrote the Spanish Dances," from *The Etude*, volume 16,

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<sup>512</sup> Moritz Moszkowski, *Spanish Dances, Op. 12: For One Piano, Four Hands*, eds. Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson, Alfred Masterwork Edition (Los Angeles: Alfred Music, 2012).

<sup>513</sup> Moszkowski, *Spanish Dances, Op. 12*, 3.

<sup>514</sup> Moszkowski, *Spanish Dances, Op. 12*, 2.

September 1912.<sup>515</sup> All fingering and material in parenthesis are editorial in this edition, and thus are decisions left to the discretion of the performers.

Constructive performance suggestions can be found in footnotes provided by the editors. The secondo player's right hand plays rolled chords in the first two measures of the first movement and the editors suggest the performer to continue to arpeggiate or roll the chords for a more guitar-like sound as seen in figure 6.9.

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<sup>515</sup> Moszkowski, *Spanish Dances*, *Op. 12*, 3.

**Figure 6.9.** Performance suggestions. Moszkowski, *Spanish Dances*, Op. 12, 4.

SECONDO

Moritz Moszkowski  
(1854–1925)

Allegro brioso (♩ = 63)

*f*

*simile* (a)

7

*mf*

13

*f*

19

2.

*p*

(tenuto)

25

1 2

(a) Continue to arpeggiate the chords for a more “guitar-like” sound.

(a) Continue to arpeggiate the chords for a more “guitar-like” sound.

Footnotes also explain where certain pitches are written in other editions when not present in the Nelson and Hinson edition, as shown in the example in figure 6.10.

**Figure 6.10.** Example of reference to a contrasting edition. Moszkowski, *Spanish Dances, Op. 12, 6*.

The musical score is presented in a single system with six systems of staves. Each system consists of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The measures are numbered 31, 37, 43, 49, 55, and 61. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, fingerings (e.g., 1, 2, 5, 4, 2, 1, 5), and dynamic markings (ff, f, p). A circled footnote at the bottom of the page reads: (b) In measures 36 and 84 of the Carl Simon edition, there is a C on the first beat of the right hand.

Other editorial footnotes indicate movement of the secondo player's left hand over the primo player's left hand (third movement, beginning at measure 164), how to play certain passages (the secondo player should play legato in the left hand, first

movement, at measure 52, and again at measure 81 in the fifth movement; and for the secondo player to “hold back” in the fifth movement, at measure 16, and again at measure 64), and definitions of titles of the dances.

**Mozart, Sonata in D Major, K. 448: For Two Pianos, Four Hands**

The Alfred Masterwork edition of Mozart’s *Sonata in D Major*, K. 448, edited by Hinson and Nelson, is for two pianos, four hands.<sup>516</sup> Seven scholarly sources were consulted for this edition and are cited in the foreword. The foreword in this edition includes information about Mozart in the following categories: “About the Composer,” “Mozart and His Music,” “Mozart as a Performer,” and “Mozart as a Teacher.” This categorization of Mozart’s many roles is followed by a section titled, “Performing the Sonata,” which addresses the main technical difficulty in the work: a sequence of left hand arpeggios which occurs in the third movement in measures 175 to 179 in piano one and measures 191 to 195 in piano two.<sup>517</sup> The editors suggest an alternate fingering and further suggest that performers memorize these measures as a means to handle the fingering problem.

The form of each of the three movements is provided in addition to notes about this Alfred Masterwork edition. This edition is based on an early publication of

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<sup>516</sup> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Sonata in D Major, K. 448: For Two Pianos, Four Hands*, eds. Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson, Alfred Masterwork Edition (Los Angeles: Alfred Music, 2015).

<sup>517</sup> Mozart, *Sonata in D Major, K. 448*, 5.

Breitkopf and Härtel and all markings enclosed in parentheses are editorial.<sup>518</sup> In the “Mozart as a Teacher” section, the editors mention one of Mozart’s pupils, Barbara Ployer, for whom Mozart composed his *Concerto in E-flat* (K. 449) and *G Major* (K. 453).<sup>519</sup>

**Poulenc, Sonata: 1919 Edition, For One Piano, Four Hands**

Hinson’s and Nelson’s edition of Francis Poulenc’s *Sonata* includes editorial considerations that address fingering, phrasing and articulation, French performance instructions, metronome markings, pedaling, background of the two versions of this work, relevant information about Poulenc, and the seven sources consulted in compiling the edition.<sup>520</sup> Two editions of Poulenc’s *Sonata* exist: the 1919 version and the 1939 version. Hinson’s and Nelson’s edition is based on the 1919 version of Poulenc’s *Sonata* and includes four specific note corrections which had not been previously corrected. While many reprints of the 1939 edition exist, the original edition (1919) had been overlooked until Hinson’s and Nelson’s edition of Poulenc’s *Sonata*.<sup>521</sup> This performing edition of the work includes measure numbers for reference and English translations alongside French performance instructions.<sup>522</sup>

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<sup>518</sup> Mozart, *Sonata in D Major*, K. 448, 6.

<sup>519</sup> Mozart, *Sonata in D Major*, K. 448, 4.

<sup>520</sup> Francis Poulenc, *Sonata: 1919 Edition, For One Piano, Four Hands*, eds. Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson, Alfred Masterwork Edition (Los Angeles: Alfred Music, 2012).

<sup>521</sup> Poulenc, *Sonata*, 4.

<sup>522</sup> Poulenc, *Sonata*, 5.



The editors address fingering, tempo and pedaling. All fingering is editorial and tempo markings suggested by the editors are slightly slower than the metronome markings Poulenc prescribed in his 1939 edition.<sup>523</sup> A quote from Poulenc in Keith Daniel's *Francis Poulenc: His Artistic Development and Musical Style* is provided to elucidate the composer's thoughts on pedaling: "As to the use of pedals, one can never use enough pedal, do you hear me! Never enough! Never enough!"<sup>524</sup> Pedal markings are included only twice in the 1919 edition: once in the "Prelude" at measure 41, indicating plenty of pedal, and one long pedal marking in the last two measures of the Sonata.<sup>525</sup> Suggestions for pedaling in vague terms, or to pedal often and use shallow pedals, are the only editorial pedaling markings made by Nelson and Hinson, other than those in the 1919 score. The practice of pedaling done by the primo player is suggested for this work.

The form for each of the three movements of *Sonata* is ABA. A page titled "About the Music and Performance" in the foreword provides a description of each movement in addition to the measure-by-measure breakdown of the form. This section of the foreword will prepare the performer for one of the more unusual aspects of duet playing: the primo's left hand crossing over both hands of the secondo's for several measures in both the "Prelude" and "Final" (first and third movement, respectively). Sections of the score where these cross overs occur are indicated in parentheses for the performers. In fact, immediately following two bars of pulsating rhythms in the secondo

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<sup>523</sup> Poulenc, *Sonata*, 5.

<sup>524</sup> Poulenc, *Sonata*, 5.

<sup>525</sup> Poulenc, *Sonata*, 5.

part (see figure 6.11), the primo begins with the left hand crossed over both hands of secondo.

**Figure 6.11.** Primo begins with left hand (LH) crossed over both hands of secondo. Poulenc, *Sonata*, 5.

**Sonata**  
for One Piano, Four Hands  
(1918)

**Prelude**  
PRIMO

Francis Poulenc  
(1899–1963)

Modéré  
(Moderately,  $\text{♩} = 126$ )

8va

① croisez  
(cross over)

**ff** mais doux  
(but sweetly)

décidé  
(energetically)

5

et en dehors  
and brought out)

9

8va

13

② très légèrement en dehors  
(very lightly and brought out)

① LH crosses over both hands of secondo in measures 3–10, 12–14, 47–54, 56–58, and 71.  
② The editors recommend playing the B-flat over secondo's right thumb.

① LH crosses over both hands of secondo in measures 3–10, 12–14, 47–54, 56–58, and 71.  
② The editors recommend playing the B-flat over secondo's right thumb.

**Saint-Saëns, *Variations on a Theme of Beethoven, Op. 35: For Two***  
**Pianos, Four Hands**

Saint-Saëns *Variations on a Theme of Beethoven*, Op. 35, was composed in 1873 and is based on the trio of the third movement of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata in E-flat*, Op. 31, No. 3, as noted in the Alfred Masterwork edition.<sup>526</sup> The editors include the first twenty two measures of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata in E-flat*, Op. 31, No. 3 in the "About the Music" section of the foreword in order that performers may easily access the source of the theme for this Saint-Saëns' piece. A quote found in the program annotations of Luboscutz and Nemonoff's piano-duo recital of this work sums up the impact of this piece by Saint-Saëns in the two-piano literature:

The famous Parisian understood composing for two pianos as no one since his time has really understood it. So well does his music fit the medium that he has been called the Chopin of two-piano literature. Grounded in the classics (Saint-Saëns edited many works of older composers), wise in his selection of material, talented and indefatigable, his products were bound to be worthy. To this background may be added his love of oriental music. There are but a few of his compositions that are not tinged with the freshness of an Eastern flavor. In the *Variations*, the oriental cast is to be noted particularly in the section known as the *Funeral March* and the bars immediately following.<sup>527</sup>

In their edition of *Variations on a Theme of Beethoven*, Op. 35, by Saint-Saëns for two pianos, four hands, editors Hinson and Nelson include a foreword to this edition with vital information about the composer, about the work including a structural analysis by measure, a note about the editorial marking in this edition, and a

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<sup>526</sup> Camille Saint-Saëns, *Variations on a Theme of Beethoven, Op. 35: For Two Pianos, Four Hands*, eds. Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson, Alfred Masterwork Edition (Los Angeles: Alfred Music, 2012), 6.

<sup>527</sup> Saint-Saëns, *Variations on a Theme*, 7.

bibliography listing of references for further reading. The layout of the score includes both piano one and piano two parts for each staff, as is typical for two-piano works, versus piano one on the right page and piano two on the left page for one piano, four-hand works. The alignment in the number and length of measures in both piano one and piano two parts remains consistent throughout the entire edition. For further ease of rehearsal between the two pianists, measure numbers have been added as seen in figure 6.12.

**Figure 6.12.** Example of consistent measure alignment for both piano parts. Saint-Saëns, *Variations on a Theme*, 20.



The musical material of the theme, eight variations, fugue, and coda sections are listed by measure number by the editors, outlining a clear form for the performers. Editorial markings are indicated by parenthesis for pedal and dynamic markings, all fingering notations are suggestions by the editors, and metronome markings are not included since tempo changes are indicated by the composer and change constantly within variations and between variations.<sup>528</sup> Specific instances of precise pedal

<sup>528</sup> Saint-Saëns, *Variations on a Theme*, 9.

markings are indicated by parentheses, however some pedal markings are indicated by *con pedale* in parentheses, leaving the exact pedaling of each harmony change at the discretion of the performer. An example of this can be seen in figure 6.13.

**Figure 6.13.** Example of discretionary pedaling. Saint-Saëns, *Variations on a Theme*, 11.

**Schubert, *Allegro in A Minor*, Op. 144, D. 947 (“*Lebensstürme*”): *For One Piano, Four Hands***

For Schubert’s *Allegro in A Minor* (“*Lebensstürme*”), Op. 144, D. 947, editors Nelson and Hinson provide the following in the foreword of this work as to the origins of the descriptive title:

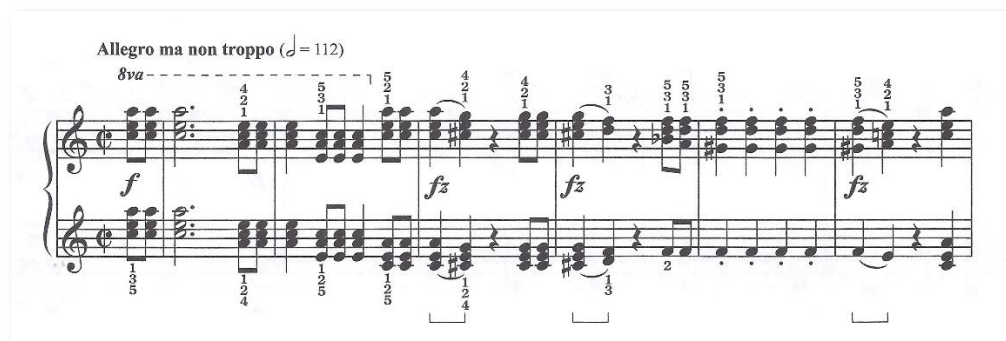
This large passionate work was composed in 1828, the year of Franz Schubert's death. It is written in sonata-allegro form and might have been intended as the first movement of a sonata. It was first published by composer and publisher Anton Diabelli (1781-1858) in 1840 with the title *Lebensstürme: Characterisches Allegro* (Life's Storms: Characteristic Allegro). The title was probably an editorial addition to make the work more marketable."<sup>529</sup>

This description is the first information presented in the foreword by the editors.

In addition to a brief history of the work, the editors discuss the form of *Allegro in A Minor* (including measure numbers for each of the sections in the sonata-allegro form) and specific pedal markings to this edition. All fingering and metronome markings are editorial. The editors include the following note about pedaling in the foreword:

"Although no pedaling is indicated in the original, the editors suggest the following minimal pedaling, which should be performed by the Primo player for the first six measures and in similar passages throughout the piece."<sup>530</sup> Figure 6.14 shows the musical example that immediately follows this statement in the foreword:

**Figure 6.14.** Musical example in foreward. Schubert, *Allegro in A Minor*, 3.



<sup>529</sup> Franz Schubert, *Allegro in A Minor*, Op. 144, D. 947 ("*Lebensstürme*"): *For One Piano, Four Hands*, eds. Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson, Alfred Masterwork Edition (Los Angeles: Alfred Music, 2012), 2.

<sup>530</sup> Schubert, *Allegro in A Minor*, 3.

**Schubert, Essential Keyboard Duets, Volume 7: Music of Franz**

**Schubert**

*Essential Keyboard Duets, Volume 7* includes four of Franz Schubert's duet works for one piano, four hands: *Fantasie* in F Minor, Op. 103, D. 940, *Rondo in A Major*, Op. 107, D. 951, *Two Characteristic Marches*, Op. 121, D. 886, and *Allegro in A Minor* "Lebensstürme", Op. 144, D. 947.<sup>531</sup> All works in this volume have been collected and edited by Hinson and Allison Nelson. The four works have also been published individually by Alfred Music and edited by Hinson and Nelson.<sup>532</sup> *Essential Keyboard Duets, Volume 7* includes background information on the history of the keyboard duet:

The first known works for keyboard duet (one piano, four hands) were written by two English composers in the early-17<sup>th</sup> century: *A Verse to Play on One Virginal or Organ*, by Nicholas Carlton (ca. 1570-1656), and *A Fancy for Two to Play*, by Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656). The first published duets, *Four Sonatas or Duets for Two Performers on One Piano Forte or Harpsichord*, by Charles Burney (1726-1714) [sic], were released in London in 1777. Prior to that, in 1765, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) and his sister, Nannerl (1751-1829), performed his four-hand *Sonata in C Major*, K. 9d, in London.<sup>533</sup>

Information about this collection includes a brief background on Schubert. The most significant note from the editors about these four Schubert duets is on the issue of pedaling. Since Schubert left no pedal markings, pedaling is left to the discretion of the

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<sup>531</sup> Franz Schubert, *Essential Keyboard Duets, Volume 7: Music of Franz Schubert*, eds. Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson, Alfred Masterwork Edition (Los Angeles: Alfred Music, 2012).

<sup>532</sup> These four works, as edited by Hinson and Nelson, are covered separately in this chapter.

<sup>533</sup> Schubert, *Essential Keyboard Duets*, 2. Charles Burney died in 1814.

performers and the editors suggest it should be used sparingly and done by the primo player.<sup>534</sup> A brief “Pedagogical Value” section is included in the foreword in which the editors discuss the importance of duet performance for developing listening skills, technique, rhythmic control, and musicianship. This section is followed by brief synopses of each of the four duets.

All metronome markings are in parentheses and are suggestions made by the editors. Uniform staccato and phrase markings are provided by the editors because inconsistencies exist throughout the original editions. Minor notational inconsistencies have also been corrected by the editors.

**Schubert, *Fantasie in F Minor, Op. 103, D. 940: For One Piano, Four***

**Hands**

The foreword in *Fantasie in F Minor, Op. 103, D. 940* by Franz Schubert, edited by Hinson and Nelson,<sup>535</sup> includes a brief history of the work. The editors mention that this is Schubert’s most frequently performed piano duet and then state,

Schubert kept the theme in its original form throughout the work, in contrast to Franz Liszt (1811-1886), who, in compositions of similar construction, varied the theme each time it appeared. Furthermore, inspiration from the Baroque and Classical periods—French overture style, decorative ornamentation, scherzo and trio form, fugal writing—take precedence over compositional innovations of the Romantic period.<sup>536</sup>

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<sup>534</sup> Schubert, *Essential Keyboard Duets*, 2.

<sup>535</sup> Franz Schubert, *Fantasie in F Minor, Op. 103, D. 940: For One Piano, Four Hands*, eds. Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson, Alfred Masterwork Edition (Los Angeles: Alfred Music, 2012).

<sup>536</sup> Schubert, *Fantasie in F Minor*, 12.



All fingering in this edition is editorial, and the editors offer a useful suggestion for the secondo player when they state, “In several passages, the physical discomfort for the Secondo can be eliminated by playing the first notes of the measure as an octave in the left hand (measures 126 and 127, for instance).”<sup>537</sup>

The sources consulted for this edition are as follows: *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music* by Kathleen Dale (London, Oxford University Press, 1954), *Schubert* by Alfred Einstein (London, Cassel & Co. Ltd., 1951), *The Piano Duet* by Ernest Lubin (New York, Grossman Publishers, 1970), *Piano Duet Repertoire* by Cameron McGraw (Bloomington, Indiana University Press 1981), and *Schubert’s Music for Piano Four-Hands* by Dallas Weekley and Nancy Arganbright (White Plains, NY, Pro/Am Music Resources, Inc., 1990).<sup>538</sup>

The editorial metronome marking provided for the opening is 100 to the quarter note. This work is written in four contrasting sections with no break. The foreword lists the four sections of this work by measure numbers, detailing the larger four section in addition to the subsections within each larger section. The second section begins in measure 121. The editors suggest 84 to the quarter note on the metronome at the beginning of measure 121. See figure 6.15.

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<sup>537</sup> Schubert, *Fantasie in F Minor*, 3.

<sup>538</sup> Schubert, *Fantasie in F Minor*, 3.

**Figure 6.15.** Measure 121. Schubert, *Fantasie in F Minor*, 15.



The third section of this work begins at measure 164 (editorial metronome marking is suggested at 72 to the dotted half note); the fourth section begins at measure 440 and the tempo indication is marked as “Tempo I” (original tempo marking is 100 to the quarter note). Tempo changes are indicated in parentheses within sections by the editors as well. The fourth and final section begins at measure 476. The editors indicate a faster pace to the performers by listing the tempo marking at 112 to the quarter note, versus 100 at the beginning of this section.

**Schubert, *Rondo in A Major*, Op. 107, D. 951: For One Piano, Four**  
**Hands**

In their edition of Schubert’s *Rondo in A Major*, Op. 107, D. 951, editors Hinson and Nelson offer a special note about ornamentation which requires careful attention to details for the performer:

Discrepancies between the manuscript and the first edition include some ornamentation being omitted from the latter. The *Rondo* uses four types of ornaments. The trill is used six times: in Primo part measures 23, 57, 61, 208, 212, 309. At the last occurrence, a prefix and termination are added. The turn is used several times and is always played with the same note pattern. The speed of the turn depends on the length of the note to which it is attached; the longer the

main note, the slower the turn. The acciaccatura and inverted mordent also appear.<sup>539</sup>

Several of the sources consulted were also consulted for the other Schubert works edited by Hinson and Nelson. Volumes consulted for this edition are *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music* by Kathleen Dale (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), *Schubert: A Musical Portrait* by Alfred Einstein (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), *Piano Duet Repertoire* by Cameron McGraw (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), and *Schubert's Music for Piano Four-Hands* by Dallas Weekley and Nancy Arganbright (White Plains, NY: Pro/Am Music Resources, Inc., 1990).<sup>540</sup>

The editors make special note in all other editions of piano ensemble works for any fingerings to be editorial, and when fingerings by the composer are present in other editions, editorial fingerings are put in parentheses. While all fingering suggestions here are useful in practice and performance, specific fingering suggestions for certain ornaments are especially helpful for students. Although not all ornaments, including turns, trills, and mordents, include specific fingering, many do. In figure 6.16, ornaments are present in measure 10, 12, two in measure 15, and one trill in measure 23. Fingerings are written out in measures 15 and 23.

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<sup>539</sup> Franz Schubert, *Rondo in A Major, Op. 107, D. 951: For One Piano, Four Hands*, eds. Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson, Alfred Masterwork Edition (Los Angeles: Alfred Music, 2012), 3.

<sup>540</sup> Schubert, *Rondo in A Major*, 3.

**Figure 6.16.** Example of fingering and ornamentation. Schubert, *Rondo in A Major*, 5.

**RONDO IN A MAJOR**  
PRIMO

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)  
Op. 107; D. 951

Allegretto quasi Andantino (♩ = 108)

*p*

The musical score is written for piano (p) and is in 2/4 time. It features a variety of fingering and ornamentation markings throughout the piece. The score is divided into five systems, each with a measure number in a box (6, 11, 16, 20). The key signature is A major (three sharps). The tempo is marked 'Allegretto quasi Andantino' with a metronome marking of 108 quarter notes per minute. The piece is in the 'PRIMO' position. The score includes various fingering numbers (1-5) and ornamentation symbols (trills, mordents, etc.).

**Schubert, *Two Characteristic Marches, Op. 121, D. 886: For One Piano, Four Hands***

In the Alfred Masterwork edition of Franz Schubert's *Two Characteristic Marches*, Op. 121, D. 886 for one piano, four hands,<sup>541</sup> Nelson and Hinson provide a special note about fingering: "All fingering is editorial. In some octave passages, to alleviate awkwardness, the editors have redistributed the notes between right and left hands. These redistributions are marked with brackets. No notes have been omitted."<sup>542</sup> Established as a standard for works edited by Nelson and Hinson, pedaling is to be done by the primo player where legato playing is needed and all metronome markings are editorial. In this work, pedaling is left to the discretion of the performers.

The sources recommended are three books: *Schubert: A Critical Biography* by M.J.E. Brown (London: McMillan, 1961), *Schubert: A Musical Portrait* by Alfred Einstein (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), and *Schubert's Music for Piano Four-Hands* by Dallas Weekley and Nancy Arganbright (White Plains, NY: Pro/Am Music Resources, Inc., 1990).

This work is more straightforward than several of the other piano ensemble works co-edited by Allison Nelson. Footnotes are not included in the score of this work. Hand crossings over the other player's hands are not required. Specific pedaling, written-out ornamentation and translations of more unusual terms are included. This

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<sup>541</sup> Franz Schubert, *Two Characteristic Marches, Op. 121, D. 886: For One Piano, Four Hands*, eds. Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson, Alfred Masterwork Edition (Los Angeles: Alfred Music, 2012).

<sup>542</sup> Schubert, *Two Characteristic Marches*, 3.

work may be suitable for sight-reading or it may be assigned to college freshmen piano majors as a first collegiate piano ensemble piece. Figure 6.17 presents the secondo and primo parts, reduced in size.

**Figure 6.17.** Secondo and primo parts side-by-side. Schubert, *Two Characteristic Marches*, 4-5.

The image displays two pages of a musical score for Franz Schubert's "Two Characteristic Marches" for One Piano, Four Hands. The left page is the "SECONDO" part and the right page is the "PRIMO" part. Both are in 3/4 time, marked "Allegro vivace" with a tempo of quarter note = 96. The music is in G major and consists of two stanzas, 4-5 and 11-16 measures. The notation includes various dynamics (f, p, pp, f) and articulations (sempre staccato). The score is presented in a reduced size for clarity.

**Schumann, *Six Etudes in Canon Form*, Op. 56: Arranged For One  
Piano, Four Hands by Georges Bizet**

The Alfred Masterwork edition of Robert Schumann's *Six Etudes in Canon Form*, Op. 56<sup>543</sup> includes detailed discussions in the foreword which includes an introduction to the origins of this work, relevant historical performances of arrangements of this work, a brief description of each etude, how editorial markings can be determined from the urtext, and suggestions for further reading. The editors indicate that all fingerings and all parenthetical material are editorial and that this edition is based on the Durand edition, Paris, France, with no date.<sup>544</sup> This edition is for one piano, four hands.

*Six Etudes in Canon Form*, Op. 56 is one of three sets of pieces Robert Schumann composed for the pedal piano. The other two sets of pieces for the pedal piano are *Four Sketches*, Op. 58 and *Six Fugues on the Name of B-A-C-H*, Op. 60, the latter being for organ or pedal piano. The foreword provides historical information and background on the origins of *Six Etudes in Canon Form*, Op. 56. Schumann's admiration for Bach and his intensive studies of counterpoint led him to rent a pedalboard attachment for his home, inspiring him to write pieces specifically for the pedal piano.<sup>545</sup> An editor's note is made about the use of the pedal. The editors

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<sup>543</sup> Robert Schumann, *Six Etudes in Canon Form*, Op. 56: Arranged For One Piano, Four Hands by Georges Bizet, eds. Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson, Alfred Masterwork Edition (Los Angeles: Alfred Music, 2012).

<sup>544</sup> Schumann, *Six Etudes*, 5.

<sup>545</sup> Schumann, *Six Etudes*, 3.

recommend the pedal to be played by the primo player, however, they also note that care should be taken not to cover up the imitation in the secondo part.<sup>546</sup> Georges Bizet (1832-1875) arranged *Six Etudes in Canon Form*, Op. 56 for one piano, four hands. Not only does the foreword include vital information about the origins of these etudes, important performance dates by prominent pianists of other arrangements of Schumann's Op. 56 are provided:

The first Carnegie Hall performance of any of the Op. 56 etudes was on April 11, 1916, when Percy Grainger (1882-1961) performed "Etude No. 3." The first complete performance of the six etudes at Carnegie Hall was on December 8, 1939, when Vitya Vronsky (1909-1992) and Victor Babin (1908-1972) performed Debussy's two-piano arrangement of the etudes. More recently, pianists Emanuel Ax (b. 1949) and Yefim Bronfman (b. 1958) performed the two-piano arrangement at the University of California, Berkeley on March 26, 2005.<sup>547</sup>

Brief descriptions of each etude discuss performance techniques, technical requirements of the pianists, and overall form of each etude. The editors also point out where the canon can be heard for each etude. The canon in "Etude No. 3" and "Etude No. 4," for example, is heard at the fifth, while the canon in "Etude No. 1" is found at the octave throughout the piece.<sup>548</sup> Suggestions for the technical requirements for most of the etudes are described as good finger independence, clear execution of trills and scale passages in both hands, a good legato and fine control of shadings. More specific directions are provided for some etudes, such as, "The sixteenth notes should not be taken too fast, so that the melodious quality can come through easily," for "Etude

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<sup>546</sup> Schumann, *Six Etudes*, 4.

<sup>547</sup> Schumann, *Six Etudes*, 3.

<sup>548</sup> Schumann, *Six Etudes*, 4.



No. 4,” and “Some of the performance techniques required here are playing melodies embedded in staccato chords, a light touch, and performing within a restricted dynamic range,” for “Etude No. 5.”<sup>549</sup> Most of the etudes are indicated as ABA form, and tempo markings are provided by the editors for each etude in this collection.

Parenthetical markings which are written into the score include when to take the right hand under the left hand when the hands are virtually on top of one another,<sup>550</sup> when one person’s hand may cross over the other person’s hand,<sup>551</sup> a tempo markings (included immediately after a ritardando indicated by Schumann),<sup>552</sup> and English translations of French margining’s (for example, quittez means to release).<sup>553</sup> French titles are given to each of the six etudes. The editors include English translations in parentheses at the beginning of each etude.

### **Perspectives on the Editions**

A strong foundation of scholarly research is conspicuous in all of Nelson’s co-edited piano ensemble publications with Alfred Music. These publications also demonstrate attention to detail that benefits performers, teachers and students. Each of the editions includes background and historical information on the piece and on the

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<sup>549</sup> Schumann, *Six Etudes*, 4.

<sup>550</sup> Schumann, *Six Etudes*, 13.

<sup>551</sup> Schumann, *Six Etudes*, 26-27.

<sup>552</sup> Schumann, *Six Etudes*, 16 and 17.

<sup>553</sup> Schumann, *Six Etudes*, 21 and 29.

composer. References are sourced in each case and other editions of the same works are consulted and discussed by the editors. The discussion of form for each work is an important component not often discussed in editions of piano ensemble works.

Together, these attributes separate these editions from other ensemble editions which do not include historical background, form, or context for the performer and teacher.

Teachers and performers will find the general layout and presentation of the scores beneficial as well. The scores are uncluttered, clear and easy to use. Footnotes are used in place of editorial comments written directly into the score when referencing specific details, such as certain note distributions or hand crossings. Measure numbers are provided in all works and rehearsal of the pieces for one piano, four hands is assisted by presenting the same number of measures for each musical line. The format of the foreword for each publication provides consistency for teachers and performers alike.

Another aspect of these editions that sets them apart is their clarity and attention to detail with regard to editorial markings and suggestions. Care is taken to differentiate the composer's markings (for example, pedaling and tempo markings) by the use of parentheses to indicate any such pedaling or tempo markings that the editors suggest and which were not in the original. When comments are provided in parentheses, performers and teachers can immediately recognize them as editorial comments. Suggestions for tempo and pedal markings stem from research in scholarly sources on the works in addition to Nelson's extensive career experience as a piano ensemble performer. This inclusion of tempo or pedaling suggestions directly in the score can be quite helpful to performers and teachers. Editorial markings throughout, all seem to be

provided with the best interests of the performers in mind and all support the intentions of the composer.

Performance suggestions of how to play certain passages and suggestions for technical aspects for the performers to anticipate make these editions appealing to teachers. For example, passages that require even playing of sixteenth-notes in Schumann's *Six Etudes in Canon Form*, Op. 56 are discussed in the foreword. Teachers may more readily assess what will be required of the student before assigning a piano ensemble work, or the teacher may better determine whether to assign a student to either the primo or secondo part depending on what is appropriate to the individual student. A clear, organized and detailed approach to the information presented in each foreword will appeal to teachers and performers alike. All comments and suggestions are limited to what the editors considered appropriate in practicing, rehearsing and performing each individual work. These seventeen publications co-edited by Allison Nelson constitute a comprehensive and thoughtful approach to the presentation of a substantial body of important piano ensemble works.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Career Synopsis**

Allison Nelson began music studies early in life in Australia which set her on a career path that would lead to a long and productive career as a pianist, teacher and editor—one that has spanned well over seventy years. Born in 1927, Nelson was introduced to piano by her mother, May Nelson, and began studying early with Jessica Dix who also served as the principal accompanist for the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. As a child, it appears that Nelson was willing to practice diligently and became focused on developing her skill as a pianist beyond any other endeavor. According to early reviews of Nelson's performances in Australia, as well as a personal letter received in 1942 from Neville Cardus, a distinguished music critic and writer for British newspaper *The Manchester Guardian*, she had considerable talent as a young pianist.

Nelson gave her first full length solo performance in the Adelaide Town Hall in 1938 at the age of ten and a second solo performance in 1939. Those two public

performances of advanced repertoire, together with guidance from Jessica Dix, led Nelson into a direct relationship with the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) for whom Nelson would perform regularly from around 1940 through 1944. These performances made Nelson a musical celebrity in Australia as a teenager, particularly since her commitments with ABC required her to travel to the other states in Australia for performances with ABC orchestras. In addition, many of Nelson's performances were broadcast live on the radio by ABC.

Nelson's education in Australia was unorthodox but the circumstances confirm that she was a fine student as well as a gifted pianist. She attended public school during her elementary years and reports that she was always first in her class. She separately advanced through the Australian Music Examinations Board (AMEB) examinations in music faster and earlier than any previous student in Australia, completing all exam levels by the age of eleven in 1938. Her success in the AMEB examination process and her piano performance abilities earned Nelson a two-year scholarship—awarded in late 1938 or 1939—to the Royal College of Music in London, but she was forced to decline this scholarship and the opportunity to study in London due to the outbreak of war in Europe. Around the same time, Nelson's parents put Nelson in a private girls' school so she could devote more time to practicing piano and preparing for concerts. The private school allowed Nelson to complete her classes at noon each day to devote her after-school hours to practice.

By late 1942, at age fifteen, Nelson was given a full scholarship and admitted to the music program at the University of Adelaide to study for the degree of bachelor of music. She began studying at the university in January 1943 even though she had not

yet completed her high school studies. While attending the university, Nelson had her busiest performance years in Australia. This included many performances with ABC orchestras as well as radio broadcasts of live performances with ABC studio orchestras. Nelson's ABC performances involved significant travel and took place in cities that included Adelaide, South Australia, Sydney, New South Wales, Melbourne, Victoria, Perth, Western Australia, Brisbane, Queensland, and Hobart, Tasmania. It was also common for Nelson to give a contemporaneous solo concert in these venues, which required her to develop and maintain a significant amount of performance-ready, advanced repertoire.

Nelson's performance experience and hard work paid off for her in May of 1944, at age seventeen, when she met Eugene Ormandy in connection with two performances with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra led by the visiting conductor. This was the first critical event that led to an important career transition for Nelson. Ormandy took an immediate interest in Nelson and became her unofficial sponsor and mentor in many ways. He made arrangements for Nelson to study at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia without the required audition and he chose Rudolf Serkin to be Nelson's piano teacher at Curtis. Nelson learned of her opportunity to study at Curtis in the late summer of 1944 and very quickly thereafter she left Australia for the month-long trip to Philadelphia, beginning her studies at Curtis immediately upon arrival in September of 1944.

Nelson's studies at Curtis under Serkin were comprised of five years of serious work and practice during which Nelson also studied with Mieczyslaw Horszowski when Serkin was unavailable due to performance obligations. Nelson was immersed at Curtis

in an atmosphere of fine music and the highest caliber of musicians and pianists. Nelson traces her musical roots primarily through Serkin and the instruction she received from him at Curtis. By the time Nelson completed her studies at Curtis in 1949, she was twenty-two years old, had attended seven years of combined college and post-secondary music institute studies and, to her chagrin, did not have a high school diploma. Although her education was unorthodox, it provided her with outstanding musical training as a pianist and served as a fitting complement to her many performance opportunities early in her life and later as a professional musician. However, Nelson also reports that her years at Curtis left her and other pianists with no training or preparation concerning how to earn a living as a concert pianist.

This aspect of Nelson's career surfaced in 1949 when Nelson completed her studies at Curtis and decided to marry Harry Neal—the second critical event that led to an important career transition for Nelson. Nelson's marriage to another pianist and former student at Curtis was followed quickly by an opportunity for her to do a return concert series for ABC in Australia. While in Australia, away from her new husband, Nelson suffered from a bout with nerves and found that performing as a soloist at that point in her career was not what she wanted. On the other hand, performing as a duo pianist with her new husband was enjoyable and rewarding. Moreover, Harry Neal proved to be determined at organizing and managing their new career as a duo. With more hard work and determination, the duo team built a successful touring career as Nelson and Neal, achieving popularity both for their approach to touring (traveling by truck or bus with their matched concert pianos and later with their children) as well as

for their expertise as performers of duo repertoire. The couple gave approximately 1500 concerts in the United States, Canada and around the world between 1950 and 1968.

Nelson's career turned a corner in September of 1968 when Harry Neal died unexpectedly from a heart attack at their home in Paris, Tennessee. This was the third critical event in Nelson's career that led to her transition to university teacher and artist-in-residence at UTM, first as part-time faculty and then full time beginning in 1971. During this transition period between 1968 and 1971, Nelson returned to solo performing but had to find a way to care and provide for her family of three children still in their teenage or pre-teen years. UTM provided an opportunity for Nelson to teach full time and she again applied herself to this work as she built a successful teaching career at UTM between 1971 and 1989 when she retired as professor emerita. Her years at UTM also allowed Nelson to use her decades of piano ensemble performance experience to form and develop the University Trio at UTM as well as the UTM Piano Ensemble. When Nelson began her full-time teaching at UTM, she was a key part of the university's development of a bachelor of music in piano performance degree program, participating in many aspects of the curriculum development and establishment of the program at UTM.

After Nelson's retirement from UTM in 1989 she remained active as a performer with other musicians at and around UTM and Martin, Tennessee. She returned for one academic year to teach at UTM at their request in 2001-2002. Her continued interest in performing piano duo repertoire led Nelson to an editing relationship with Dr. Maurice Hinson when she was looking for a copy of the original manuscript of all five of Ibert's *Histoires*. Around the same time, Nelson also met Dr.



E.L. Lancaster with Alfred Music when he came to UTM, and this serendipitous series of events led to the suggestion that Hinson and Nelson collaborate as editors of a new Alfred Music edition of *Histoires*. The co-editors began their work on the *Histoires* edition in 2005 and have since produced a total of seventeen publications of piano ensemble works for Alfred Music. Nelson's work as an editor of piano ensemble works keeps her busy in retirement and constitutes a fitting legacy. Her focus on quality, her attention to detail and her seriousness about music are the hallmarks of all of her work as a pianist, teacher and editor.

### **Conclusions**

Allison Nelson's career success came in stages, first as a pianist, then as a teacher and finally as an editor. These successes may fairly be attributed to Nelson's personal traits including her obvious passion for music, her seriousness and dedication to her work, her insistence on quality and authenticity, her ability to adapt and transition when opportunities arose or circumstances changed and her willingness to take an innovative approach to her touring performance career in the 1950s and 1960s.

Nelson began her career as a serious pianist at the age of ten before she could fully understand the path that she was taking. She was a strong musician as a child, some would say a prodigy, whose success as a child performer was likely due to a combination of innate talent, a strong work ethic and thorough teaching from her first teacher, Miss Jessica Dix. The success Nelson experienced as a performer prepared her for the next level of success that she found in her studies at Curtis. The opportunity to study at Curtis came about through her fortuitous relationship with conductor Eugene

Ormandy, but that relationship arose from her hard-earned performances long before she met Ormandy. Nelson's persistence and dedication to her craft can be seen at this early stage in her life and these traits were key to each new level of career achievement.

Nelson's move from Australia to the United States to study with Rudolf Serkin at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia exemplifies Nelson's ability to transition and adapt to new environments and challenges. It must have been difficult for Nelson to move halfway around the globe at the age of seventeen and to adapt to a new way of life, away from family and friends. Nelson did it readily and without complaint for the sake of her music. In this respect, Ormandy became a key mentor in Nelson's life and his choice of Serkin for her principal piano teacher was also accepted by Nelson without question or complaint. In retrospect, the choice of Serkin as Nelson's teacher seems obvious given Serkin's serious nature as a musician and his well-known propensity to practice excessively. Serkin had a great impact on Nelson's development as a pianist and eventually as a teacher.

Although Nelson's time at Curtis was critical to her musical development and maturity, one of the weaknesses of the conservatory system at that time was the lack of preparation for its students in the business of making a living after graduation. This weakness may still exist in the conservatories in the field of piano and similar disciplines to this day and suggests a possible subject for further research.

Nelson was able to overcome the practical limitations of making a living as a professional pianist and to transition into an innovative performance career with her husband as the Nelson and Neal piano duo. At the age of twenty-three, Nelson and her new husband, Harry Neal, tried something remarkable for its time. They established an

aggressive concert performance touring pace, giving approximately 100 concerts each year, drove to performances in a truck (later a bus), brought and tuned their own matched grand pianos to each performance and traveled with their young children, raising a family on the road. This was a creative approach to a performance career and the sheer scope of presenting 1,500 concerts between 1950 and 1968 may be Nelson's most impressive career accomplishment. Her popularity and success as part of the Nelson and Neal piano duo may be credited to her hard work, her collaboration with Harry Neal and Neal's charisma and business savvy in promoting the duo.

When Nelson's career took an abrupt turn with Harry Neal's untimely death in 1968, Nelson once again showed her ability to adapt to a sudden life change. In 1968 at the age of forty-one Nelson had three children under the age of fifteen to raise and support. She was able to rather quickly adapt from touring as a soloist and collaborative musician to a full-time teaching career at UTM, not far from her home in Paris, Tennessee. In her role at UTM Nelson was able to use her extensive piano ensemble experience from her Nelson and Neal years to establish the UTM Piano Ensemble. Nelson's performance activities while at UTM also reflect her dedication as a musician in addition to her ability to adapt to new environments and life changes.

Nelson was also an innovator as an author and editor through her research and development of a complete piano study series, the *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series*. This series of books was ahead of its time, representing the need for a graded series of piano literature from the average-age beginner to an advanced level in the field of music education. Unfortunately, this series was never marketed in any significant way by the publisher that obtained the publishing rights, so it did not have widespread impact.

The interviews of Nelson's colleagues conducted for this study and the student questionnaires collected reflect the considerable impact Nelson had with those whom she came into contact in her roles as a pianist, teacher and editor. As a performer, Nelson strove to create a beautiful sound through the combination of critical listening, balance, phrasing, creating a long line in the music and through musical authenticity. As a teacher, Nelson was also able to pass on these musical concepts and to create a teaching legacy as artist-in-residence at UTM. Nelson's contribution through her teaching in the bachelor of music in piano performance program were lasting and the UTM music department continues to benefit from her influences.

Despite her level of seriousness, work ethic and determination to always perform, teach, write and edit at the highest level, colleagues and students who participated in this study report that Nelson maintains wit and charm. Nelson's personal qualities and characteristic traits were evident to the author over the course of four days of in-person interviews. Nelson's passion for music in combination with her characteristic seriousness and dedication highlight a career that spans over seventy years. She has remained insistent on producing the highest quality result in all of her endeavors, whether performing as a soloist or collaborative artist, writing and publishing the *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series*, teaching piano students at UTM or co-editing piano ensemble literature through Alfred Music. At the age of seventy-eight, when the opportunity to work with Alfred Music presented itself, Nelson devoted herself to producing high quality editions of piano ensemble music. Nelson continues to express her commitment to music by continuing her editorial work on piano ensemble literature on the Alfred Masterwork Series.

## **Recommendations**

This study has focused only on the career and contributions of Allison Nelson to the field of piano and as a result it is necessarily limited. Nevertheless, the circumstances, timing and impact of Nelson's life and career accomplishments revealed in this study, together with the current state of piano pedagogy, combine to suggest related topics which justify further study. These include at least the following:

1. Studies of other important pianists and educators who cross or blur the lines between traditional performing artists and accomplished pedagogues, and in particular, those artists who enjoy celebrity at a national or international level and who take on more traditional or regional roles as teachers for some significant portion of their careers. In addition, to the extent that performance pianists seek out other career paths in music, the question of how undergraduate piano performance degree programs may adapt to better prepare pianists for music-based career alternatives warrants further study.
2. Studies of other important educators in the last fifty years are still needed and are important to build a more complete picture of the key figures in piano pedagogy in the United States.
3. Studies of the role, definition and career expectations of the concert pianist in our society today, as well as the role of undergraduate and graduate music programs and pedagogues in the training and preparation of pianists so that they may prosper in a performance career; and a comparison of how those roles have evolved in the second half of the twentieth century and beyond.
4. The issue of authenticity and strict adherence by performers to the intentions of composers in their original scores is a matter of special importance to Allison Nelson, as is the need to memorize piano music to hear and produce the most musical sound, whether as a soloist or ensemble player. These feelings guided her as a performer and also as a writer and editor searching for the most authentic and original editions of works. With the increasing access to and reliance on electronic documents, electronic scores and other web-based tools and systems used by performers, researchers, teachers and students, further studies of the use, advantages and disadvantages of such devices and systems and their impact on performers, teachers and students are warranted.

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## APPENDICES

- A. The *Piano Study Series* of Books by Allison Nelson and Harry Neal Listed by Date of Publication
- B. The Alfred Masterwork Series, Books co-edited by Allison Nelson Listed Alphabetically by Composer
- C. Journal Articles Authored by Allison Nelson Listed by Date of Publication
- D. Cover Letter and Interview Guide for Allison Nelson
- E. Cover Letter and Interview Questions for Co-editors and Publishing Colleagues of Allison Nelson
- F. Cover Letter and Interview Questions for Dr. Elaine Harriss
- G. Cover Letter and Interview Questions for Professional Colleagues at UTM
- H. Cover Letter and Interview Questionnaire for Professional Colleagues Outside of UTM
- I. Cover Letter and Questionnaire for Former Students of Nelson at UTM

## APPENDIX A

### THE *NELSON AND NEAL PIANO STUDY SERIES* LISTED BY DATE OF PUBLICATION

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*Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series-Christmas Book.* Bedford Park, Ill., Manorhouse Press, 1973.



## APPENDIX B

### THE ALFRED MASTERWORK SERIES, BOOKS CO-EDITED BY ALLISON NELSON LISTED ALPHABETICALLY BY COMPOSER

Chaminade, Cecile. *Le matin and Le soir (Morning and Evening), Op. 79: For Two Pianos, Four Hands*. Edited by Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2015.

Chopin, Frédéric. *Rondo in C Major, Op. 73: For Two Pianos, Four Hands*. Edited by Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2012.

Dvorák, Antonin. *Slavonic Dances, Op. 46: For One Piano, Four Hands*. Edited by Carol Bell, Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2012.

Dvorák, Antonin. *Slavonic Dances, Op. 72: For One Piano, Four Hands*. Edited by Carol Bell, Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2012.

Ibert, Jaques. *Histoires: For One Piano, Four Hands*. Edited by Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2012.

Mendelssohn, Felix. *Allegro brillante, Op. 92: For One Piano, Four Hands*. Edited by Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2012.

Mendelssohn, Felix. *Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream, Op. 21: For One Piano, Four Hands*. Edited by Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2012.

Moszkowski, Moritz. *Spanish Dances, Op. 12: For One Piano, Four Hands*. Edited by Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2012.

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. *Sonata in D Major, K. 448: For Two Pianos, Four Hands*. Edited by Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2015.

- Poulenc, Francis. *Sonata: 1919 Edition, For One Piano, Four Hands*. Edited by Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2012.
- Saint-Saëns, Camille. *Variations on a Theme of Beethoven, Op. 35: For Two Pianos, Four Hands*. Edited by Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2012.
- Schubert, Franz. *Allegro in A Minor, Op. 144, D. 947 ("Lebensstürme"): For One Piano, Four Hands*. Edited by Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2012.
- Schubert, Franz. *Essential Keyboard Duets, Volume 7: Music of Franz Schubert*. Edited by Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2012.
- Schubert, Franz. *Fantasie in F Minor, Op. 103, D. 940: For One Piano, Four Hands*. Edited by Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2012.
- Schubert, Franz. *Rondo in A Major, Op. 107, D. 951: For One Piano, Four Hands*. Edited by Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2012.
- Schubert, Franz. *Two Characteristic Marches, Op. 121, D. 886: For One Piano, Four Hands*. Edited by Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2012.
- Schumann, Robert. *Six Etudes in Canon Form, Op. 56: Arranged For One Piano, Four Hands by Georges Bizet*. Edited by Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson. Alfred Masterwork Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2012.

## APPENDIX C

### JOURNAL ARTICLES AUTHORED BY ALLISON NELSON LISTED BY DATE OF PUBLICATION

“Arpeggio Fingerings Can Strengthen Fingers and Hands.” *Clavier* 14, no. 3 (March 1975): 32.

“Is Technique Really Necessary?” *Tennessee Music Teacher* 3, no. 3 (April 1977).

“Original Works for Children.” *Clavier* 16, no. 6 (October 1977): 25-28.

“Noteworthy Knowledge.” *Clavier* 21, no. 9 (November 1982): 4.

“A Philosophy of Technique.” *American Music Teacher* 33, no. 3 (January 1984): 40.

“The Piano Ensemble Music of Brahms.” *American Music Teacher* 36, no. 1 (Sept.-Oct. 1986): 31-32, 40.

“The Kind and Gentle Horszowski.” *Clavier* 42, no. 1 (January 2003): 2-4.

“The Pedal Piano and the Schumanns.” *Clavier* 2, no. 3 (May-June, 2010): 32-35.

## APPENDIX D

### COVER LETTER AND INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ALLISON NELSON

Lynn Worcester

[Address]

[Date]

Dear Dr. Nelson:

I am very pleased to report that your contributions to the field of piano will be the subject of my D.M.A. document at the University of Oklahoma. I have received approval from my faculty committee to proceed with this study and I have also obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board.

I would like your permission to conduct a series of in-person interviews with you at your home or at some other location convenient for you. I expect the interviews to be conducted over a period of several days, with the possibility that I may wish to conduct a follow up interview by phone or in person if additional matters arise during my research that call for further input or comment from you. It is difficult to accurately estimate the time necessary to complete these interviews, but at this stage I expect that our meetings would take several hours or more per day for at least three days, possibly more.

These interviews will be a critical part of my research for this study and I expect to conduct these interviews largely based on an Interview Guide which I will send to you prior to our first meeting. This Interview Guide is intended simply to prompt our discussion of topics relevant to this study, but I expect that other issues or matters will arise during the interviews that are not specifically referenced in this document.

With your permission, I will audio tape all interviews. I would like to quote you directly in this study. In addition, I would like to record and copy any documents, recordings, photographs or things from your personal files that you are willing to share and that are relevant to this study. I will separately need your written permission to reproduce and use these documents and things in connection with this study. My goal is to arrive at a fair, balanced, and historically accurate document that will preserve your many significant contributions to the field of piano for future generations of piano pedagogues and students.

I will provide you with a form for your signature that will record and constitute your informed consent to participation in this study prior to the time that we meet for the interviews. In addition, I will be contacting many of your former and current colleagues as well as some of your former piano students in order to conduct interviews or to collect answers to questionnaires about their past experiences and interactions with you.

Of course, your participation in this study, including the interviews referenced above, is entirely voluntary. If you withdraw or decline participation, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the study. If you agree to participate, you will be free to decline to answer any question and may choose to withdraw at any time.

Feel free to call me at (949) 230-8689 or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Jane Magrath, at (405) 360-0338 if you have any questions. All correspondence can be handled by email if you prefer.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this study and for your help in arranging suitable interview time. Your thoughtful assistance is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lynn Worcester

Home Phone: (949) 230-8689

Email: lworcester@shorter.edu

## INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ALLISON NELSON

Topics and areas of exploration for these interviews are open-ended where there is a need for flexibility in the direction of lines of inquiry. General topics are included in the interview guide, but specific lines of inquiry are also included where source material suggests appropriate discussion topics. It is expected that additional specific areas of questioning will surface during the course of the interview and will be explored at that time.

### I. Essential information on pre-professional life

Goal: to compile a narrative of events in Nelson's early life that helped shape her career and character; and to discuss how early performance and study experiences influenced her views of piano pedagogy.

#### A. Verification of personal data

1. Birth date, place
2. Birth parents, parents' occupations
3. Pre-college education, location/date
4. Early college education, location/date
5. Later educational experiences

#### B. Influential events and characteristics of family members and community in early years.

1. What family or community events had an impact on you as a child?
2. Talk about your home in Australia. What was your town/city like? Did you move? What influence did your community/city have on you?
3. Why did you study piano? Who encouraged you? Did your siblings study piano?
4. What role did your mother play in your development as a person and as a student?
5. What role did your father play?
6. What did your siblings study (piano or music lessons)?
7. Talk about your relationships with your siblings as a child and later on in life.
8. Were there an events in your community, church or school that strongly influenced you as a student of music? Or that influenced your character?
9. How difficult or easy was it for you as a young child to practice piano? Why? Did this change over time? Why?

10. What activities besides piano competed for your time and attention as child?
  11. What kind of a piano student were you as a child? Emotionally? Physically? Mentally? Have any of these characteristics from your youth influenced you as a teacher? Which ones; and why?
- C. Elementary and high school experiences
1. Extracurricular activities (non-musical). Favorite memories or stories?
  2. Who were your inspirational teachers and what were their qualities?
  3. What aspirations did you have for your studies and your career in elementary school? In high school?
- D. Memorable characteristics of music teachers and musical experiences, elementary years through high school.
1. Who were your music teachers?
  2. What materials did you use in your music study?
  3. What did you learn from your teachers?
  4. How would you characterize their influence? Who had the greatest influence on your performance style in your elementary years? In high school years?
  5. Why and how did you begin performing and touring performances as a child? Who helped or encouraged this process? What was it like and what did you learn from these experiences?
  6. What were the most important and memorable performances or musical experiences as a youth?
  7. What are your memories of Eugene Ormandy? How did he influence you as a performer? Teacher?
- E. Circumstances surrounding undergraduate/graduate experiences
1. Years of degrees.
  2. Choice of focus in studies.
  3. Talk about being accepted at Curtis without an audition. How did this happen and why? How did you feel about this? How did others (family, fellow students, teachers) feel about this?
  4. What was it like studying with Rudolf Serkin? What is your favorite memory of him? Your least favorite memory of him?
  5. What did you know about Serkin before you studied with him? What was the most significant influence that he had on you as a student? As a teacher?



- F. Verify names and dates of study with all piano and other significant music teachers and locations for each.

## II. The Nelson & Neal Performance Years

Goal: To document Nelson's transition from solo performer to duet partner, and the decision to tour while raising a family; and to record the effects of these experiences as they may have influenced her later career as a pedagogue.

- A. What led to the decision for you and your husband to permanently collaborate as duo performers? Why limit yourself to performing only this way?
- B. The focus on duet repertoire and the influence this had on your later career as a pedagogue. What was the state of duo repertoire and literature in 1949 when you made this decision? Is this something that you wanted to change? When and how?
- C. The logistics of touring as a duet team and raising a family on the road. Talk about touring with your husband and life on the road as performers. How did this change when you had children? How did you travel and tour with a young family?
- D. "This Is Your Life," Nelson & Neal recognized on NBC television. How did you learn that you would be the subject of this television program on NBC? Talk about the experience and how it affected you.
- E. When did your performance events as a couple wind down or end? What did you do professionally between this time and the time that you began working at UTM?
- F. What went into the writing of *Wave as You Pass*, by Harry Neal?
  - 1. What role did you play in the development or writing of this book?
  - 2. Besides "living it," what do you think is important about the subject matter of the book?
  - 3. How does this book inform or help pianists and students? How does this book impact piano pedagogy?
  - 4. Apart from your own Piano Study Series (GIA), do you have any special advice for pianists that teach their own children?

## III. Career at the University of Tennessee at Martin (UTM)

Goal: To document Nelson's influences in her career at UTM, and the nature of her duties and contributions throughout her career at UTM. Particular emphasis will be placed on her role in the establishment and development of the UTM Piano Ensemble and Nelson's views on the role of ensemble in the field of piano pedagogy.

- A. Describe the circumstances surrounding your employment at the University of Tennessee at Martin.
  - 1. What was your initial position and what duties did you have?
  - 2. How did these duties change and/or expand over the course of your tenure at UTM?
- B. What events and personal contributions stand out as important during your years at UTM from 1969 to 2003?
  - 1. What were your teaching responsibilities?
  - 2. What were your performance responsibilities?
  - 3. Describe your interest in piano pedagogy at the time; and describe your view of the "state of piano pedagogy" at that time.
  - 4. Describe how, if at all, your interest in piano pedagogy changed during your years at UTM?
  - 5. What prompted you to found the UTM Piano Ensemble? When did it start? What difficulties did you encounter and how were they resolved?
  - 6. How did the UTM Piano Ensemble impact you as a pedagogue? Did it change your view of piano pedagogy in any way? If so, how?
  - 7. How did the University Trio at UTM begin? Why? How did this performance activity relate to your views on the importance of ensemble work for piano and pianists? Talk about the performances and the events that you were a part of with this Trio.
- C. What were your goals in your work with students who were planning careers in music and more specifically as teachers? How did this change over time?
  - 1. Who are your piano students who stand out in your memory? Why?
  - 2. How did you mentor students that wanted a career in teaching? What traits did you model for these students?
  - 3. Do you have advice for other artists and teachers who mentor pianists?
- D. What was your underlying philosophy in teaching piano? What traits did you try to model and to instill in your students?

- E. The passing of Harry Neal in 1969. How did your husband's death in 1969 affect your professional life and career?
- D. Contributions to pedagogy through the UTM Piano Ensemble. How did your work with the UTM Piano Ensemble contribute to the field of piano pedagogy? How did students benefit?
- E. Master's classes, other speaking-teaching events and competitions at UTM.
  - 1. Collect available dates and details on all Master's classes, seminars and speaking events given by Nelson at UTM.
  - 2. How did these events benefit students, teachers and other participants?
  - 3. Did your approach to pedagogy change over time through these events, and did your attitudes change regarding the subject matter or emphasis? If so, how? Why?
  - 4. What piano competitions or other music competition events were you involved in organizing or hosting at UTM? How did this impact your teaching? How did these events influence your views on piano pedagogy?

#### IV. Professional activities outside the University

Goal: To discuss Nelson's professional activities outside UTM. The focus will be on her contributions to state and national organizations as well as her master classes, performance engagements and professional collaborations, particularly in regards to how these activities impacted her career as a pedagogue.

- A. Leadership roles and participation in MTNA. Participation in MTNA conventions and other events.
  - 1. Years of involvement, conferences and years attended, sites?
  - 2. Describe the nature of your work or involvement with the MTNA, including committee work and presentations.
- B. Leadership roles and participation in the TMTA (Tennessee Music Teacher's Assoc.) or any other state organization or association.
  - 1. Years of involvement, conferences and years attended, sites?
  - 2. Describe the nature of your involvement including committee work and presentations.
- C. Performance activities; Seminars; Master classes; Speaking engagements.

1. Collect dates, locations, and topics for each.
2. All performance activities outside of UTM?
3. Master's classes and seminars at other schools or venues (separate from MTNA or TMTA)?
4. Other appearances, workshops, sponsorships or activities that relate to your career or the encouragement of music study and pedagogy?

## V. Alfred Publications

Goal: To discuss Nelson's relationship with Alfred Publications, her contributions to piano pedagogy through her editing of Alfred Masterworks Editions and her collaboration with other editors in this series of publications.

- A. The beginning of the relationship and its development over time.
  1. When did you begin working with Alfred Publications? How and why did this relationship begin?
  2. What did you hope to add to the piano literature through this collaboration? How were co-editors selected? Did you have any input in that process? If so, what?
  3. To which student/performance levels are these works directed?
- B. The Masterworks Series
  1. How were the particular piano works selected? Why these pieces?
  2. Do you have any favorites? Why?
  3. How do you think these works should be used by piano teachers?
  4. How early in a student's piano training do you believe they should play duets or other ensemble pieces? Why? What will this work teach students?
- C. Collaborating with other editors
  1. What was the process between co-editors in developing these books?
  2. Describe what it was like working with Maurice Hinson? Carol Bell?
  3. What difficulties did you encounter in developing this series of works? How were these issues resolved?

## VI. GIA Publications, Inc. and the *Nelson and Neal Piano Study Series*

Goal: To discuss Nelson's relationship with GIA Publications, her contributions to piano pedagogy through the Nelson and Neal Piano Study

Series, her collaboration with Harry Neal on this series and the impact of this series on her views of piano pedagogy.

A. Development of the Study Series.

1. When did you and Harry Neal first think about publishing this series of books?
2. It has been written that this series came from the process of teaching your own children piano. How so? Why did you feel it was necessary to develop a teaching approach for your own children that may have been different than your own experience? What was missing in available literature?
3. What steps did you take to organize the material that became part of this Study Series? What role did you play in this process? What role did Harry Neal play?

B. The relationship with your publisher.

1. How did you go about finding a publisher?
2. When did you begin working with GIA? Who did you deal with? What support did the publisher provide? Did the publisher have any influence on the material?
3. How many editions of this Study Series have there been? When?

C. The Piano Study Series

1. How is this series different from other piano study series that were available at the time of first publication? What still distinguishes this series today?
2. How do you feel this Study Series advanced the process of piano pedagogy?
3. What comments and suggestions have you heard from other teachers that used this Study Series with their students?
4. What, if anything, would you add to or change in this Series if you were to do it over today?

VII. Philosophy, Career Overview and Reflections

Goal: To identify and explore the ideas and philosophies of Allison Nelson and her perceptions and opinions of the development and direction of the field of piano pedagogy; and to discuss Nelson's opinions and reflections on her career as a pedagogue and performer.

A. Looking back on your life, what have been the key influences on you as a person and as a musician?

- B. Looking back to your years in the 1950s, on the road performing, how do you think these experiences influenced you as a pedagogue?
- C. What do you see as your primary contributions to music?
- D. What words would you use to describe yourself as a person, a teacher, a pedagogue, a writer?
- E. What do you perceive to be the challenges and opportunities facing musicians and piano pedagogues going forward from here?
- F. Looking back on your career at UTM, how has the profession of piano pedagogy changed over the last 40 years or so?
- G. How important is piano ensemble work in the field of piano pedagogy today, how has that changed over your career, and how important do you believe it should be?
- H. What recommendations do you have for career pedagogues, especially young teachers?
- I. What areas of study and research do you feel are the most important to keyboard teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

#### VIII. Gathering Documentation from Allison Nelson.

Goal: To identify, collect and record significant documents, articles, teaching material, pamphlets and records maintained by Allison Nelson that are relevant to her career as a pedagogue, especially those that are not already part of an academic record or process.

- A. Make arrangements to copy and use materials with permission as necessary.
- B. Prepare a log to record all significant items by type, date and significance.

## APPENDIX E

### COVER LETTER AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CO-EDITORS AND PUBLISHING COLLEAGUES OF ALLISON NELSON

Lynn Worcester

[Address]

[Date]

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

The contributions of Dr. Allison Nelson to the field of piano are the subject of my D.M.A. document at the University of Oklahoma. Dr. Nelson has given me her approval for this study and appropriate approval has been obtained through the Institutional Review Board.

Because of your work with her on the Alfred Masterwork Series as a co-editor or publisher, you are in a position to provide key information for this research. I would like to request thirty to forty minutes of your time in order to complete an individual interview by telephone and I hope that you will accept this invitation to be part of this important study. I have designed interview questions for you that should prompt your opinions, memories and impressions of Dr. Nelson.

I will send a list of interview questions to you prior to our phone conversation. Please be prepared to answer all questions as honestly and completely as possible, giving all details that you think are helpful in explaining your answers. With your permission, I will audio tape the interview. My goal is to arrive at a fair, balanced, and historically accurate document that will preserve the significant contributions of Dr. Nelson for future generations of piano pedagogues and students.

I would like to quote you by name in my document. However, if you wish to keep your answers confidential, I will certainly honor this request. You can notify me of this by responding accordingly to my inquiry at the opening of the interview.

Please return the informed consent form in the enclosed envelope if you agree to participate in a phone interview. Feel free to call me at (949) 230-8689 or faculty supervisor Dr. Jane Magrath at (405) 360-0338 if you have any questions. All correspondence can be handled by email if you prefer.

Thank you in advance for your help. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lynn Worcester

Home Phone: (949) 230-8689  
Email: lworcester@shorter.edu



INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CO-EDITORS AND PUBLISHING  
COLLEAGUES OF ALLISON NELSON

1. Do you wish to participate in this research?
2. Are you willing to be named and to be quoted as an individual in the document that results from this research?
3. How long have you known Dr. Nelson professionally?
4. What was your professional relationship and how were you first introduced to Dr. Nelson?
5. How did the Alfred Masterwork Series of piano ensemble works come about? What circumstances led to your involvement in the series?
6. How were decisions made concerning what piano works to include? How were decisions made about particular arrangements, markings, notations and other details involved in each work? What artistic or stylistic differences emerged, if any, and how were they resolved?
7. How would you characterize Dr. Nelson as a person?
  - a. How would you describe Nelson's personality?
  - b. What, in your opinion, motivated Nelson in her professional life?
  - c. Can you share any extraordinary, colorful, or other anecdotes that would illuminate her character, personality, and style?
8. How would you characterize Dr. Nelson as an editor?
  - a. How would you characterize Nelson's editing style or her approach to editing piano works for ensemble performance?
  - b. What skills does she possess that set her apart as an editor?
  - c. Are you aware of any events or circumstances that aided in her rise to prominence as an editor? If so, what events or circumstances?
  - c. Please describe the nature and significance of Nelson's contributions to the Alfred Masterwork Series of piano ensemble works?
9. How would you describe Nelson's philosophies regarding piano pedagogy and performance?
10. What, in your opinion, are Nelson's greatest contributions to the field of piano pedagogy?
11. Is there anything you would like to add?

12. Are there any other professionals who may be able to add to this study with whom I should speak?

## APPENDIX F

### COVER LETTER AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ELAINE HARRISS

Lynn Worcester

[Address]

[Date]

Dear Dr. Harriss:

The contributions of Dr. Allison Nelson to the field of piano are the subject of my D.M.A. document at the University of Oklahoma. Dr. Nelson has given me her approval for this study and appropriate approval has been obtained through the Institutional Review Board.

Because of your extensive work and collaboration with her, both as a teaching colleague and as a performance colleague, you are in a position to provide key information for this research. I would like to request an in-person interview and I hope that you will accept this invitation to be part of this important study. I have designed interview questions for you that should prompt your opinions, memories and impressions of Dr. Nelson.

I will send a list of interview questions to you prior to our conversation. Please be prepared to answer all questions as honestly and completely as possible, giving all details that you think are helpful in explaining your answers. With your permission, I will audio tape the interview. My goal is to arrive at a fair, balanced, and historically accurate document that will preserve the significant contributions of Dr. Nelson for future generations of piano pedagogues and students.

I would like to quote you by name in my document. However, if you wish to keep your answers confidential, I will certainly honor this request. You can notify me of this by responding accordingly to my inquiry at the opening of the interview.

Please return the informed consent form in the enclosed envelope if you agree to participate. Feel free to call me at (949) 230-8689 or faculty supervisor Dr. Jane Magrath at (405) 360-0338 if you have any questions. All correspondence can be handled by email if you prefer.

Thank you in advance for your help. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lynn Worcester

Phone: (949) 230-8689

Email: lworcester@shorter.edu

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ELAINE HARRISS

1. Do you wish to participate in this research?
2. Are you willing to be named and to be quoted as an individual in the document that results from this research?
3. How long have you known Dr. Nelson professionally?
4. What was your professional relationship and how were you first introduced to Dr. Nelson?
5. How did the UTM Piano Ensemble come into existence? What were the circumstances that led to your involvement?
  - a. How would you describe Nelson's role in the formation of the UTM Piano Ensemble?
  - b. What was Nelson's view of the importance of and role for piano ensemble work and its relationship to piano pedagogy? Is this different from your view, and if so, how?
  - c. What, in your opinion, motivated Nelson in the pursuit of encouraging piano ensemble?
  - d. Can you share any extraordinary, colorful, or other anecdotes that would illuminate Nelson's involvement with or approach to piano ensemble work? Any stories that would illuminate her style and personality?
  - e. Did the UTM Piano Ensemble face any significant challenges? How did Nelson deal with those challenges, and to what ends?
  - f. Do you feel that the UTM Piano Ensemble has been a success, particularly during the years of Nelson's involvement? If so, how has it impacted the field of piano pedagogy on a local, state or national basis?
6. Do you have any written materials, whether published or unpublished, that document UTM Piano Ensemble events or performances? Or reviews of UTM Piano Ensemble events or performances? Will you share copies of any such documentation for this research?
7. How did the University Trio at UTM come into existence? What were the circumstances that led to your involvement?
  - a. How would you describe Nelson's role in the formation of the Trio and its function?
  - b. What was Nelson's view of the importance of and role for chamber music and its relationship to music and piano pedagogy?
  - c. How would you describe Nelson's participation in the Trio? Her performance capabilities? Her attitude and dedication?
  - d. Can you share any extraordinary, colorful, or other anecdotes that would illuminate Nelson's involvement with or approach to chamber music?

- Any stories that would illuminate her style and personality in this context?
- e. Did the Trio face any significant challenges? How did Nelson deal with those challenges, and to what ends?
  - f. Do you feel that the Trio was a success during the years of Nelson's involvement? If so, why? And if not, why?
8. Do you have any written materials, whether published or unpublished, that document University Trio performances? Or reviews of Trio performances? Will you share copies of any such documentation for this research?
  9. How would you characterize Dr. Nelson as a person?
    - a. How would you describe Nelson's personality?
    - b. What, in your opinion, motivated Nelson in her professional life?
    - c. Can you share any extraordinary, colorful, or other anecdotes that would illuminate her character, personality, and style?
  10. How would you characterize Dr. Nelson as a teacher and as a pianist?
    - a. What skills does she possess that set her apart as a teacher? As a pianist?
    - b. Please give your opinion on the effectiveness of Nelson as a teacher. Can you describe any particular teaching strategies or tactics that either aided her efforts as a teacher or impeded them?
    - c. Are you aware of any events or circumstances that aided in her rise to prominence as a pedagogue? If so, what events or circumstances?
    - d. Please describe the nature and significance of Nelson's contributions to UTM, particularly as they may be separate from her work with the UTM Piano Ensemble or the University Trio?
    - e. How would you assess Nelson's position among other teachers you have known?
  11. How would you describe Nelson's philosophies regarding piano pedagogy and performance?
  12. What, in your opinion, are Nelson's greatest contributions to the field of piano pedagogy?
  13. Is there anything you would like to add?
  14. Are there any other professionals who may be able to add to this study with whom I should speak?

## APPENDIX G

### COVER LETTER AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL COLLEAGUES AT UTM

Lynn Worcester

[Address]

[Date]

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

The contributions of Dr. Allison Nelson to the piano profession are the subject of my D.M.A. document at the University of Oklahoma. Dr. Nelson has given me her approval for this study and appropriate approval has been obtained through the Institutional Review Board.

Because of your work and/or collaboration with her as colleague at University of Tennessee at Martin, you are in a position to provide key information for this research. I would like to request twenty to thirty minutes of your time in order to complete an individual interview by telephone and I hope that you will accept this invitation to be part of this important study. I have designed interview questions for you that should prompt your opinions, memories and impressions of Dr. Nelson.

I will send a list of interview questions to you prior to our phone conversation. Please be prepared to answer all questions as honestly and completely as possible, giving all details that you think are helpful in explaining your answers. With your permission, I will audio tape the interview. My goal is to arrive at a fair, balanced, and historically accurate document that will preserve the significant contributions of Dr. Nelson for future generations of piano pedagogues and students.

I would like to quote you by name in my document. However, if you wish to keep your answers confidential, I will certainly honor this request. You can notify me of this by responding accordingly to my inquiry at the opening of the interview.

Please return the informed consent form in the enclosed envelope if you agree to participate in a phone interview. Feel free to call me at (949) 230-8689 or faculty supervisor Dr. Jane Magrath at (405) 360-0338 if you have any questions. All correspondence can be handled by email if you prefer.

Thank you in advance for your help. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lynn Worcester

Phone: (949) 230-8689

Email: lworcester@shorter.edu



## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR UTM COLLEAGUES

1. Do you wish to participate in this research?
2. Are you willing to be named and to be quoted as an individual in the document that results from this research?
3. How long have you known Dr. Nelson professionally?
4. What was your professional relationship and how were you first introduced to Dr. Nelson?
  - a. Did you collaborate with Nelson on any performances, workshops, master classes or other events at UTM?
  - b. If so, can you describe your collaboration(s)?
5. How would you characterize Dr. Nelson as a person?
  - a. How would you describe Nelson's personality?
  - b. What, in your opinion, motivated Nelson in her professional life?
  - c. Can you share any extraordinary, colorful, or other anecdotes that would illuminate her character, personality, and style?
6. How would you characterize Dr. Nelson as a teacher and as a pianist?
  - a. What skills does she possess that set her apart as a teacher? As a pianist?
  - b. Please give your opinion on the effectiveness of Nelson as a teacher. Can you describe any particular teaching strategies or tactics that either aided her efforts as a teacher or impeded them?
  - c. Are you aware of any events or circumstances that aided in her rise to prominence as a teacher or as a pianist? If so, what events or circumstances?
  - d. Please describe the nature and significance of Nelson's contributions to UTM?
  - e. How would you assess Nelson's position among other performance teachers you have known?
7. How would you describe Nelson's philosophies regarding piano pedagogy and performance?
8. What, in your opinion, are Nelson's greatest contributions to the field of piano pedagogy specifically and to music generally?
9. Is there anything you would like to add?
10. Are there any other professionals who may be able to add to this study with whom I should speak?

## APPENDIX H

### COVER LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COLLEAGUES OUTSIDE OF UTM

Lynn Worcester

[Address]

[Date]

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am presently involved in a study investigating the contributions of Dr. Allison Nelson to the piano profession. This study is being carried out under the supervision of Dr. Jane Magrath in the School of Music. Dr. Nelson has given me her approval to carry out this study and appropriate approval has been obtained through the Institutional Review Board. The results of this study will be the basis of a D.M.A. document at the University of Oklahoma.

The purpose of this study is to document the contributions of Dr. Nelson to the field of piano study through investigations of her life and activities as a pianist, teacher, author, editor and leader in professional music organizations. An understanding of Dr. Nelson's contributions will not only serve to recognize a great leader in the field of piano performance and pedagogy, but will also outline accomplishments worthy of emulation by future teachers and students.

You have been identified either by Dr. Nelson or by others involved in this study as a colleague of Allison's who might be able to contribute important information. As a result, your assistance in this project will be invaluable. The enclosed questionnaire is designed to solicit your recollections and opinions about your experiences or collaborations with Dr. Nelson. Your input is crucial because it will allow me to present a complete and accurate professional picture of Dr. Nelson.

The questionnaire will take about 20 to 30 minutes to complete. By completing the questionnaire, you are consenting to participate in this study. Please answer the questions as honestly and completely as possible, adding any remarks or details you think would be helpful in explaining or clarifying your response. Feel free to use the back of the question sheets or additional paper, if necessary.

Since the study focuses on the contributions of Dr. Nelson to the field of piano pedagogy, there are no risks to you beyond those present in normal everyday life. The benefits to subjects and the profession will include a more complete awareness of the importance of individual contributions in the continued successes of future pedagogues and growth of the field of piano performance and pedagogy.

Participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate involves no penalty or loss of benefits and you may discontinue at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older.

I would like to quote you and your comments by name in my document. However, your wish for confidentiality will be honored if you leave the signature line blank at the end of the questionnaire and you will not be named in the document. Please return your completed questionnaire to me in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope by \_\_\_\_\_. I invite you to email me or call me at (949) 230-8689 or Dr. Jane Magrath at (405) 360-0338 if you have any questions.

Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation in this study. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lynn Worcester

Phone: (949) 230-8689

Email: lworcester@shorter.edu

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PROFESSIONAL COLLEAGUES OUTSIDE  
OF UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT MARTIN

Please use reverse side when necessary.

1. How long have you known Dr. Nelson professionally?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What was your professional relationship and how were you first introduced to Dr. Nelson?
  - a. Did you collaborate with Nelson on any performances, seminars, workshops, master classes or other events?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. If so, can you describe your collaboration(s)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. When you think of Dr. Nelson, what words first come to mind?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How would you characterize Dr. Nelson as a person?

- a. How would you describe Nelson's personality?
  - b. What, in your opinion, motivated Nelson in her professional life?
  - c. Can you share any extraordinary, colorful, or other anecdotes that would illuminate her character, personality, and style?
5. How would you characterize Dr. Nelson as a teacher and as a pianist?
- a. What skills does she possess that set her apart as a teacher? As a pianist?
  - b. Please give your opinion on the effectiveness of Nelson as a teacher and as a speaker. Can you describe any particular teaching strategies or tactics that either aided her efforts as a teacher or impeded them?

- c. How would you assess Nelson's position among other performance teachers you have known?
- 6. How would you describe Nelson's philosophies regarding piano pedagogy and performance?
- 7. What, in your opinion, are Nelson's greatest contributions to the field of piano pedagogy specifically and to music generally?
- 8. How did she impact your life?

## APPENDIX I

### COVER LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FORMER STUDENTS OF NELSON



[Address]

[Date]

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am presently involved in a study investigating the contributions of Dr. Allison Nelson to the field of piano. This study is being carried out under the supervision of Dr. Jane Magrath in the School of Music at the University of Oklahoma. Dr. Nelson has given me her approval to carry out this study and appropriate approval has been obtained through the Institutional Review Board. The results of this study will be the basis of a D.M.A. document at the University of Oklahoma.

The purpose of this study is to document the contributions of Dr. Nelson to the field of piano through investigations of her life and activities as a pianist, teacher, author, editor and leader in professional music organizations. An understanding of Dr. Nelson's contributions will not only serve to recognize a great leader in the field of piano pedagogy, but will also outline accomplishments worthy of emulation by future pedagogues.

You have been identified by Dr. Nelson as one of her former students who might be able to contribute important information to this study. As a former student of Nelson at the University of Tennessee at Martin, your assistance in this project will be invaluable. The enclosed questionnaire is designed to solicit your recollections and opinions about your study with Dr. Nelson. Your input is crucial because it will allow me to present a complete and accurate professional picture of Dr. Nelson.

The questionnaire will take about 30 minutes to complete. By completing the questionnaire, you are consenting to participate in this study. Please answer the questions as honestly and completely as possible, adding any remarks or details you think would be helpful in explaining or clarifying your response. Feel free to use the back of the question sheets or additional paper, if necessary.

Since the study focuses on the contributions of Dr. Nelson to the field of piano pedagogy, there are no risks to you beyond those present in normal everyday life. The benefits to subjects and the profession will include a more complete awareness of the importance of individual contributions in the continued successes of future pedagogues and growth of the field of piano pedagogy.

Participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate involves no penalty or loss of benefits and you may discontinue at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older.

I would like to quote you and your comments by name in my document. However, your wish for confidentiality will be honored if you leave the signature line blank at the end of the questionnaire and you will not be named in the document. Please return your completed questionnaire to me in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope by \_\_\_\_\_. I invite you to email me or call me at (949) 230-8689 or Dr. Jane Magrath at (405) 360-0338 if you have any questions.

Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation in this study. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lynn Worcester

Phone: (949) 230-8689

Email: lworcester@shorter.edu

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FORMER STUDENTS OF  
ALLISON NELSON

Please use reverse side when necessary.

1. What degree did you receive at the University of Tennessee at Martin?
2. During what years to you study with Dr. Nelson? From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.
3. What is your current occupation?
4. When you think of Dr. Nelson, what words first come to mind?
5. How did she impact or facilitate your career?
6. Did you participate in the UTM Piano Ensemble? If so, how did this impact your study of piano?
7. Are there particular things that you learned from Nelson that significantly impacted your understanding of piano and piano pedagogy? (E.g., interpretation, phrasing, musicality, theory, technique, sound production, preparation for performance, how to practice, and repertoire.)

8. What specific things did you learn from Dr. Nelson regarding the following?
- a. Interpretation
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Phrasing
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. Musicality
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. Technique
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - e. Sound production
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - f. Preparation for performance

g. How to practice

h. Choosing Repertoire

i. Competitions

j. Motivation

k. Other topics

9. Describe the personal qualities and/or skills that set Nelson apart from other teachers.
10. In your opinion, what were Dr. Nelson's greatest strengths as a teacher?
11. In your opinion, what were her weaknesses as a teacher?
12. Are there any memorable experiences that occurred during lessons? Or other additional comments, anecdotes or recollections that would be of value to this study?
13. In your opinion, what are Dr. Nelson's most important and enduring contributions to the field of piano pedagogy?

If I may use your name in connection with your remarks in my document, please sign here. If you wish to remain anonymous do not sign.

---

Please return by \_\_\_\_\_ to:

Lynn Worcester

## APPENDIX J

### PERMISSION FOR USE OF COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL FROM ALFRED MUSIC



---

<b>Subject:</b>	Fwd: Permission request for musical examples in dissertation
<b>From:</b>	Lynn Worcester (lynnworcester@gmail.com)
<b>To:</b>	lynnworcester@gmail.com;
<b>Date:</b>	Saturday, June 6, 2015 2:43 PM

---

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Alfred Permissions <[Permissions@alfred.com](mailto:Permissions@alfred.com)>  
**Subject:** RE: Permission request for musical examples in dissertation  
**Date:** May 27, 2015 at 1:35:26 PM PDT  
**To:** Lynn Worcester <[lynnworcester@gmail.com](mailto:lynnworcester@gmail.com)>, Alfred Permissions <[Permissions@alfred.com](mailto:Permissions@alfred.com)>  
**Cc:** "E.L. Lancaster" <[ELLancaster@alfred.com](mailto:ELLancaster@alfred.com)>

Hello Lynn,

Since this usage is educational in nature it would be deemed FAIR USE and you are free to proceed forward.

Please use this email as any permission proof needed.

Best of luck with your dissertation!

Sincerely,

**Michael Worden**  
Copyright Resource Administrator  
Alfred Music  
P.O. Box 10003 • Van Nuys, CA 91410-0003  
(818) 891-5999 x269 | (818) 450-0746 fax



**Alfred Music**  
LEARN • TEACH • PLAY



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**From:** Lynn Worcester [<mailto:lynnworcester@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 20, 2015 5:08 PM  
**To:** Alfred Permissions  
**Cc:** E.L. Lancaster  
**Subject:** Permission request for musical examples in dissertation

To: Permissions Office, Alfred Music

I am a graduate student at the University of Oklahoma and I'm in the final stages of completing my dissertation document for the degree of Piano Performance and Pedagogy. This email is my official request for permission to use certain specific examples of music from the Alfred Masterwork Library which relate to the subject of my document. I explain my request below and I have separately attached a document that contains the specific items I propose to use, the measure numbers from the particular musical examples and the Alfred Music item number related to each request.

I have copied Dr. Lancaster with this email for a couple of reasons. Dr. Lancaster was interviewed for my study and he was kind enough to review a draft of my dissertation document recently which included each of the examples covered by this request. If you have any questions about this request, Dr. Lancaster suggested that you speak with him directly and, of course, you should feel free to call or contact me at your convenience.

My dissertation document provides career information on Allison Nelson who, among other things, is a co-editor of several Alfred Music publications. An Appendix of these Alfred Music publications (for which examples are included in my study) is part of the permission request attached to this email. My dissertation document focuses broadly on the career and life of Allison Nelson, including her career as a pianist, her teaching at the University of Tennessee at Martin, and her other writing and activities. Her editing work for Alfred Music is the subject of only one chapter and this chapter presents an overview of the work Nelson has done on these Alfred Music publications. The publications are described generally in my document and some limited examples from selected publications are presented in order to show some of the positive qualities of these publications to which Nelson contributed.

If you need additional information, details or documentation from me, please let me know as soon as possible as I am facing some time deadlines on my document. Thank you in advance for your assistance with this request.

Best regards,

Lynn Worcester  
Assistant Professor of Music  
Shorter University  
315 Shorter Ave.  
Rome, GA 30165  
949.230.8689

## APPENDIX K

### INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS – APPROVAL OF INITIAL SUBMISSION



**Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects**

**Approval of Initial Submission – Expedited Review – AP01**

**Date:** December 05, 2014

**IRB#:** 5006

**Principal**

**Approval Date:** 12/05/2014

**Investigator:** Lynn A Worcester

**Expiration Date:** 11/30/2015

**Study Title:** Allison Nelson: Pianist, Teacher and Editor

**Expedited Category:** Category 6 and Category 7

**Collection/Use of PHI:** No

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed and granted expedited approval of the above-referenced research study. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

As principal investigator of this research study, you are responsible to:

- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Obtain informed consent and research privacy authorization using the currently approved, stamped forms and retain all original, signed forms, if applicable.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications.
- Promptly report to the IRB any harm experienced by a participant that is both unanticipated and related per IRB policy.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- Promptly submit continuing review documents to the IRB upon notification approximately 60 days prior to the expiration date indicated above.
- Submit a final closure report at the completion of the project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or [irb@ou.edu](mailto:irb@ou.edu).

Cordially,

Fred Beard, Ph.D.  
Vice Chair, Institutional Review Board